

Fuel price hike, hardship: NLC to embark on nationwide protests Aug 2, hands FG 7-day ultimatum

UKPONO UKPONG

The nation's industrial harmony may be disrupted again as Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) yesterday served notice of plans to embark on a nationwide protest August 2 to

compel the Federal Government (FG) to reverse "its anti-poor and anti-workers policies".

These policies, according to the workers' union, include the recent hike in price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS), otherwise known as petrol, increase in

Tinubu asks for more time

public school fees, as well as the non-release of eight months withheld salary of university lecturers and workers and increase in Value Added Tax (VAT).

Already it has called on its affiliate unions to kick off mobilization of their members for the industrial action, which it said, pauperized Nigerians had pressured the body to

commence, given FG's alleged indifference to the outcry of downtrodden Nigerians over its hurtful policies.

In a communique issued

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Bloodbath in South-East

Thousands of lives lost, N1trn properties destroyed, Senate discusses Kanu

HARUNA SALAMI, ABUJA

One of the strands of the issue of insecurity ravaging the South-East -the sit-at-home- took centerstage in the Senate yesterday as senators resolved to condemn, in totality, the forced domiciling of millions of residents of the geo-political zone by non-state actors led by

- Rules out meeting FG on political solution to free IPOB leader
- Urges FG to liaise with Finland to extradite Simon Ekpa
- Izunaso paints picture of state of affairs in SE

Finland-based Simon Ekpa, a self-acclaimed disciple of detained leader of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Nnamdi Kanu.

Senate heard a motion which sought the release of Kanu but declined a bid to urge the Federal

Government to use political solution to free Kanu, who is being prosecuted for alleged terrorism.

Furthermore, senators were told about the sorry state of affairs in the zone due to roiling insecurity aggravated by the sit-at-home

in which thousands of persons had reportedly lost their lives, properties worth over N1trillion destroyed with investors fleeing the South East in droves.

Senate also resolved to "urge the Federal Government to collaborate

with the Finish government to extradite Simon Ekpa for prosecution; invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs (when appointed) and relevant stakeholders to carry out thorough investigation as well

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Chief of Army Staff, Major General Taoreed Lagbaja (right) and Commandant, National Defence College, Rear Admiral, Olumiyiwa Morakinyo Olotu, at the Army Headquarters, Abuja...yesterday.

No student should pay tuition in federal varsities -FG

UKPONO UKPONG

With tension rising in some higher institutions across the country over increase in fees, the Presidency yesterday cleared the air on the matter.

It will come as sweet music to the ears of many students and some parents/guardians that the Presidency has debunked media reports (not in Daily Times) that the Federal Government (FG) has increased tuition fees in federal universities in the country.

FG's position on the conten-

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More tears, again, as FCTA demolishes over 5,000 unapproved buildings

UKPONO UKPONG

It was another chapter of tears and sorrow as earth-moving equipment of the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) pulled down over 5000 buildings, deemed illegal, in the densely populated Gishiri community, an extension

of Katampe District in the nation's capital, yesterday.

The development was part of efforts to enforce strict adherence to the Abuja Masterplan, the document spelling out developmental stipulations in FCT. The hurricane of demolition had swept across several other areas in FCT in the past

couple of weeks. One of the affected areas is Trademore Estate, Lugbe, where many buildings, said to have been erected on waterways, were brought down. The matter eventually ended up in court with the FCTA authorities being restrained from carrying out further demolitions in the popular estate

even as the matter is still in court.

Also demolished in Gishiri were unapproved buildings in a green area, which is in hectares of land space, around the foot of the Katampe hill, designated and reserved for development of a multipurpose recreational facility, as well as makeshift structures built along

road corridors in the area.

Speaking yesterday during yet another round of removal, the District Monitor in charge of Katampe and Mabushi for the Department of Development Control, an organ of FCTA, Samson Atureta, said the enforcement (demolition) team

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Fuel price hike, hardship: NLC to embark on nationwide protests Aug 2, hands FG 7-day ultimatum

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after rising from its Central Working Committee (CWC) meeting and signed by NLC President, Joe Ajaero, the Congress issued a seven-day ultimatum to FG to address all the demands or be ready to watch workers take to the streets nationwide in protest.

Top of their seven-point resolutions were the immediate reversal of all anti-poor policies such as the recent hike in PMS price, Increase in public school fees, and others.

NLC demanded: "The immediate inauguration of the Presidential Steering Committee as agreed in the earlier consequential dialogues.

"To begin the building across the nation of a coalition of all Nigerians where all will be leaders and all will be followers.

"To call on all civil society organisations and Nigerians wherever they may be to begin mobilization to take action on their own to save our nation.

"To lead and organize mass protest rallies across the nation to demonstrate outrage against the inhuman actions and policies of the government.

"To give the Federal Government a seven-day ultimatum within which to meet all our demands and to embark on a nationwide action beginning Wednesday the 2nd of August, 2023 to compel the government to reverse its anti-poor and anti-workers policies.

"To consequently direct all affiliates and state councils to begin immediate mobilization and closely work with associations, individuals and other entities including the ones already on the streets to ensure that government listens to the people."

The CWC-in-Session said that the resolution

was reached after exhaustively deliberating on the crippling economic situation facing Nigerians and its attendant consequences of mass suffering, poverty and angst pervading Nigerian workers and peoples which are clear resultants of the insensitive policies and actions of the present Administration.

The CWC-in-Session recalled that on May 29, the President Bola Tinubu gave Nigerians an inaugural speech prompted the immediate increase in the price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) from N185 to N500; as action which was considered and strongly condemned by various Organs of Congress because of the massive suffering it imposed on the lives of Nigerians.

"As if that was not enough, the federal government through the instrumentality of the NNPC effected a further hike in the price of PMS to N617 per litre without having addressed the dire consequences which the earlier hike had imposed on Nigerians. Other anti-poor policies have since been unleashed on Nigerians which have left workers and masses reeling and deeply impoverished.

"CWC-in-Session noted unfortunately: That the Federal Government has shown enormous disdain and contempt for Nigerian people and workers having acted and continued to act without regards to the welfare and cries of the citizenry.

"That Government seems to have declared a war of attrition on Nigerian workers and masses without any care leaving them to the throes of hopelessness and helplessness.

"That the Federal Government has refused to put in place safeguards to protect Nigerians from the



Vice President Kashim Shettima being received on arrival at the Presidential Wing of the Pulkovo International Airport, St. Petersburg, Russia by Nigeria's Ambassador to Russia, Prof. Abdullahi Yibaiwal Shehu and top officials from the Nigerian Embassy and the Russian Foreign Ministry.

harsh economic situation that its policies have inflicted on the people; rather it has decided to insult the sensibilities of Nigerian masses by offering us N8,000 per family and offering themselves N70billion.

"That the Federal Government has frustrated and abandoned its own Committee which was a product of social dialogue between the government and workers' organizations in the country. While the Committee has not met, the government embarked on unilateral actions and programmes.

"That since Mr. President's 'subsidy is gone forever' speech at Inauguration Day; the peace of mind of Nigerians has gone; decent living gone increasing despair of unimaginable dimensions.

"That the Federal Government has continued to treat Nigerians as slaves and conquered people, which it treats with impunity without any concern on the consequences.

"That the Federal Government has continued in an unholy mission of robbing the poor to pay the rich in Nigeria as typified by its continued frustration of the activation of the agreed alternatives to Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) and new hike in prices of PMS to N617 per litre.

"That the Federal Government has continued to promote the gang-up of the ruling elite against Nigerian people and workers.

"Observes that the Federal Government has continued to churn out without relenting policies designed to emasculate

Nigerian workers and people via not just increases in PMS prices with its spiraling affect but also increases in VAT, increases in school fees across all publicly-owned secondary and tertiary institutions of learning.

"That the NNPC has turned itself into the forces of demand and supply and fixes the price of petroleum products while mouthing deregulation.

"That Government's conduct suggests it does not intend to commit itself to the MoU it signed with NLC and TUC."

Sequel to this, the CWC-in-Session said that Nigerians are outraged and have been putting pressure on NLC to lead them in protest against the increases in the pump price of PMS.

While noting that the pressure has come to a breaking point and given Government's continued indifference to the plight of the poor, the Congress resolved that it would not be party to the killing of poor Nigerian workers and masses.

The CWC-in-Session also said that it is the responsibility of men and women of conscience propelled by patriotic zeal to take necessary action to "protect democracy and our beloved nation since it is clear that the Federal Government is not interested in discussions having exhausted half of the agreed 8 weeks without activating the Presidential Steering Committee".

Meanwhile, as labour warmed up for the industrial action, President Bola Tinubu, yesterday, appealed to them to give him more time to adequately address their demands.

The appeal follows the bid by both NLC and the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) to commence strike.

Special Adviser to the President on Energy, Olu Verheijen, met with NLC and Trade Union Congress (TUC) leaders at the Presidential Villa in continuation of talks on palliatives to cushion the effects of subsidy removal.

The steering committee, which met briefly, focused on how stakeholders can fast-track interventions that will bring relief, particularly around Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), mass transportation, cleaner energy, transportation, and reducing the impact of the cost of transportation on the citizenry.

NLC President, Ajaero, while responding to questions from newsmen, insisted that organized labour would definitely stage a protest on August 2.

Speaking on the outcome of the meeting, he said: "Well, the outcome is very brief. We met based on N520 increase and the committee that was set based on that and we agreed to work to realize the objectives that was set during that moment.

Asked why the interventions was getting delayed, when Nigerians are facing excruciating pains, he said: "The two centers (NLC and TUC) have made their position known and is before Nigerians; the TUC, the NLC, our position is known. And it's public knowledge."

Also asked how feasible the proposed industrial action was, he said: "I wouldn't know, we are going ahead with the protest because we have to be emphatic on what we put in our communiqué, to say we're commencing protests from the August 2".

Also speaking to State House correspondents in Abuja, after leading members of his leadership to brief President Tinubu on the outcome of their engagement with the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD), Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tajudeen Abbas, said that President Tinubu has pleaded that since he is new in office, he needs time to evaluate the issues that are being raised by workers over which he is yet to be briefed.

The Speaker said: "What he said is that he's just coming on board. We should ask them and beg them to please give him a little more time. The things that they mentioned, he is completely unaware of them, he is yet to be briefed about all those issues.

"But from what he heard from me, also advised that we should channel those issues to the Chief of Staff to look at them one after the other.

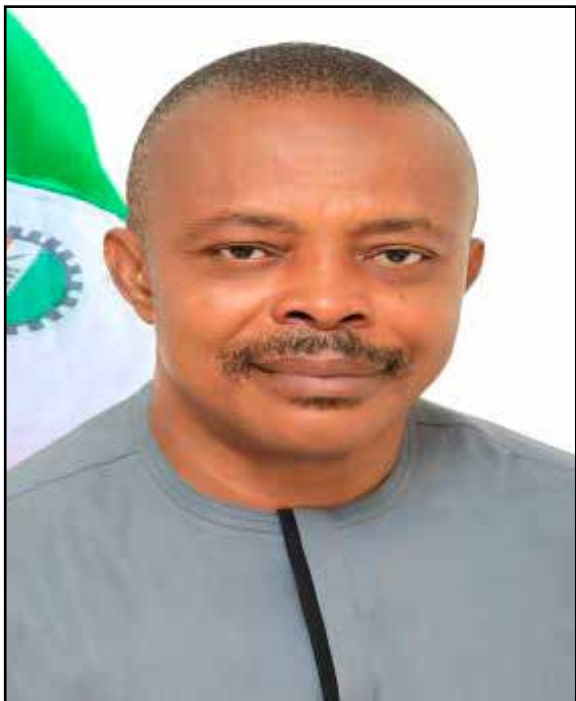
"I believe the next coming days, some concerted actions will be taken."

He said the House leadership invited NARD following their intention to go on strike, saying that the lawmakers succeeded in persuading the union to shelve the plan.

"Sequel to the meeting we had with them, there were series of conditions that they gave, that we felt we need to share with the president," he said.

According to him, the purpose of the visit to the Presidential Villa late Wednesday was to intimate the President on the progress made with the doctors' association.

He also disclosed that the House leadership also used the visit for familiarity purposes as they had not met with the president since



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Thousands of lives lost, N1trn properties destroyed, Senate discusses Kanu

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as bring other sponsors of the act to book."

The Senate decision was sequel to a motion 'Condemning the Disruptive Nature of 'Sit-At-Home' Demonstrations in the South East-Nigeria' sponsored by Senator Osita Izunaso (Imo West).

Izunaso's motion was co-sponsored by all senators from the South East irrespective of political party affiliation.

They are Senators Orji Kalu (Abia North); Abaribe, Enyinnaya (Abia South); Victor Umeh, (Anambra Central); Darlington Nwokocha (Abia Central); and Nwebonyi Peter (Ebonyi North). Others are Ifeanyi Ubah (Anambra South); David Umahi (Ebonyi South); Ndubueze Patrick Chinwuba (Imo North); Nwoye Tony (Anambra North); Kenneth Emeka (Ebonyi Central); Okechukwu Ezea (Enugu North); Onyewuchi Francis (Imo East); Osita Ngwu (Enugu West); and Chukwu Kelvin (Enugu East).

Izunaso said: "Thousands of innocent lives have been lost since this action started, and properties worth over a Trillion have been destroyed which has resulted in investors leaving the region.

"Further aware that the sit-at-home civil disobedience actions in the South East have led to the disruption/destruction of economic activities as well as immeasurable financial losses for businesses, workers, and the local economy. Because, when people are forced to stay at home and businesses remain closed, productivity declines, and income is reduced, thereby affecting the livelihoods and economic growth.

He noted that the sit-at-home protests disrupt the education of students, leading to missed classes and delays in academic progress, adding that such

prolonged disruptions have long-term effects on students' learning outcomes and educational development.

The motion further said: "Disturbed that disruption of essential public services, such as healthcare, transportation, and waste disposal, continues to have severe impact during 'sit-at-home' protests which adversely affect the well-being and safety of the general population living in the South East; Further disturbed that the 'sit-at-home' protests continues to lead to acts of violence and clashes with law enforcement agencies which has led to uncountable loss of lives of innocent people, security agents and the protesters as this increases the potential for criminal elements to take advantage of the situation to engage in looting or other unlawful activities while the people stayed at home.

"Worried that if the activities of Simon Ekpa, who is issuing the Illegal 'sit-at-home' orders is not checked, he may succeed in corrupting the minds of Nigerian youths and turning them against the government which is tantamount to treasonable felony", Senate condemned his actions and manipulations and asked the executive arm to do as resolved.

It would be recalled that in August 2021, IPOB declared a sit-at-home order every Monday in the zone over the continued detention of Kanu and demanded his release.

However, but the proscribed body eventually called off the directive after about three weeks of the declaration.

However, Ekpa continued to enforce the directive in the zone, resulting in public spat between him and IPOB leaders who insisted that Kanu had directed its suspension.



President Bola Tinubu hosts his counterpart from Benin Republic, Patrice Talon, at the Presidential Villa, Abuja...yesterday. Photo: State House Abuja.

Bayelsa govt reunites two-month-old baby with mother

AMOS OKIOMA,
YENAGOA.

Bayelsa State government yesterday reunited a two-month-old baby, Success, rescued from suspected child thieves at Azikoro community last month to the legitimate mother, Joy Lucky, after spending one month at Gloryland Orphanage, Opolo.

A Magistrate Court sitting in Yenagoa had earlier this month ordered the remand of a 30-year-old man, Kingsley Solomon, at the Nigeria Correctional Centre, Okaka, for allegedly stealing the baby.

Solomon, who was arraigned by the Bayelsa State Police Command before Magistrate Sarah B. I. Avoh on two counts bordering on assault and child stealing, had claimed that he was the legitimate father of the child, when he forcibly collected the child from the mother and made away with the baby to an unknown destination.

But respite came the way of baby and mother when a top official of Eunice Nnachi Women Advocacy Foundation (ENWAF) met the suspect with a child and invited the Azikoro Police division to investigate the circumstances surrounding the handling of a two-month-old baby by a man who is not capable to take care of a child.

Bayelsa State Commissioner for Women, Children Affairs and Social Development, Mrs. Faith Opene, who returned the child to the mother, commended ENWAF for partnering with the ministry in catering for the welfare of women and children in the state.

She advised young girls in the state to embrace knowledge through education or skills acquisition in order to fi-



nancially empower themselves before they start to produce children.

Opene urged mothers to take proper care of their children in order to have a better society.

She said: "Young girls should take their education seriously, learn a trade or get skills that would make their lives meaningful."

Founder of ENWAF, Lady Eunice Nnachi, expressed happiness over the safe return of the child to the mother, urging parents to be responsible in training their children.

Suspected internet fraudsters kill landlord in Delta

NOSA ÀKEÑZUA,
ASABA

Suspected internet fraudsters, popularly called 'Yahoo Boys', allegedly murdered a man in his 20s in his compound located along Ugbo Road, Okpaka community, Udu Local Government Area of Delta State.

The deceased, who was popularly called 'Young Landlord', was allegedly stabbed multiple times in his chest and stomach before he gave up the ghost, in the early hours of Monday in his sitting room.

It was unclear what his

relationship with the suspects was or why they had to murder him.

The deceased, who is the owner of the building where the unfortunate incident occurred, had three tenants as occupants.

One of the tenants, who spoke, said that he did not hear any sound from his landlord's apartment due to the fact that his electricity generating set was on till the early hours of the next day due to outage from public power supply.

He noted that during the day, the deceased usually had a lot of people visit him on regular basis due to "his simplicity as a person and

was mostly loved by all."

The deceased hailed from Okpaka community and is survived by his wife, a child, siblings, relatives and aged parents.

His remains were later deposited at a mortuary yesterday by his relations.

This incident came barely a year after suspected internet fraudsters 'Yahoo boys' shot dead another of their colleague, Mr. Ovie Efe in his compound, in Ugbo Road, Okpaka community, around 3:00 pm on that fateful day.

Police Public Relations Officer in Delta State, Bright Edafe, confirmed the incident, adding that investigation was ongoing.



More tears, again, as FCTA demolishes over 5,000 unapproved buildings

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followed due procedure and got necessary approvals for removal of the encroaching structures.

Atureta said the team was in Gishiri to continue the removal of encroachments in the area, saying the exercise has been ongoing in parts of FCT and targeted at reclaiming plots for legal allottees.

According to him, people who have the right allocations to the plots could not take possession because, overtime, some people were dividing and selling parts of the plots under the guise that such were 'local or indigenes' land', with unsuspecting persons buying and subsequently developing the plots.

The official explained further: "Those are the houses we have continued to remove today so that the rightful allottees will take over their plots. And you could see that there are some new perimeter fences coming up, and they are being erected by the rightful allottees.

"We needed to follow due procedures, and that's why we are here after we got approval to remove the encroachments. We have been doing it in bits; now we are about 60-70 per cent in the removal of the illegalities there.

"And since we started, we must have removed at least 5,000 shanties or illegal developments in Gishiri."

The District Monitor added: "Also, people have

started building in a green area which is in hectares of land space, around the foot of the hill, which we are reclaiming, as the place is for recreation.

"So, we are reclaiming that for the developer of the recreational area to take possession of the place. It is a continuation of what we had started, so that we make Gishiri a serene place.

"We are reaching out to the rightful owners of the encroached plots that we can get in contact with. There are some that had submitted their building plans for approval, but we couldn't process them because there were indigenous persons there. In fact, some of them are the ones reaching out to us as they have complained over time about encroachment on their plots."

It was observed that regulatory Development Control Department officials, backed by a joint team of heavily armed security personnel, stormed the area with one bulldozer and two excavators and removed those structures bearing the department's for-demolition markings while structures with legal approval for development were left untouched.

Some occupants of the illegal structures were observed lamenting their fate as the earth-moving equipment rumbled up and down, bringing down the buildings and squashing virtually everything on their path.

No student should pay tuition in federal varsities –FG

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tious matter was contained in a statement signed by the Special Adviser on Special Duties, Communications and Strategy to the President, Dele Alake.

Acknowledging that some universities have in recent weeks announced increase in the amount payable by students on sundry charges, he explained that there were only discretionary charges by each university and not tuition fee.

FG said: "It was widely reported earlier this week across some news media outlets that the Federal Government had increased tuition fees in federal universities in the country.

"These reports are inaccurate and not correct.

"We are aware that some universities have in recent weeks announced increase in the amount payable by students on sundry charges.

"However, the fact remains and we have confirmed that these are discretionary charges by each university for hostel accommodation, registration, laboratory and

other charges. They are not tuition fees.

"Authorities of these universities even made this fact clear enough in explaining the rationale behind these new fees.

"For avoidance of doubts, federal universities in Nigeria remain tuition-free."

Furthermore, he reiterated President Bola Tinubu's commitment to ensuring that every Nigerian, regardless of the economic situation of their parents, have access to quality tertiary education.

"In addition to the Students' Loans Scheme, under the Student Loans Bill signed into law by President Tinubu last month, which will go into implementation ahead of the next academic session in September, the Federal Government will also strengthen other mechanisms to support indigent students.

"Parts of the government's plans to make sure all diligent students complete their education on time, notwithstanding their parents' financial situation, include work-study, merit-based scholarships and grants," the statement said.



Ogun State Governor, Dapo Abiodun (right) received Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG), Zone 2, Mr. Ari Mohammed Ali, who paid him a courtesy call in his office at Oke-Mosan, Abeokuta...yesterday.

HURIWA asks IGP to take over investigation into Anambra lady's death

BY OUR REPORTER

Civil rights advocacy group, Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA) yesterday tasked the acting Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kayode Egbetokun, to take over investigation and fish out perpetrators of the heinous killing of a young lady, Chinyere Awuda, found dead at the abandoned swimming pool of Cosmila Hotel in Awka, the Anambra State capital.

HURIWA, in a statement by its National Coordinator, Comrade Emmanuel Onwubiko, warned that the police must not sweep the case under the carpet because of the influence of mega monetary inducements from powerful people connected to the incident.

The group said it will be a subversion and subjugation of justice if the police failed to dispassionately carry out an independent forensic probe to unravel the mysterious killing of the young lady within the hotel premises.

HURIWA said it has become imperative that the IGP transfers the investigation to specially set up forensic and crime investigators from his office so the Anambra State Police Command does not undermine the dispensation of justice.

The rights group said there are allegations that many police officers working in the Anambra State Police Command have been in the state for many years and were alleged to be surviving by sending financial inducements to top officers at Force Headquarters, Abuja, to extend their stay in

Anambra state.

HURIWA claimed that the reason is that "it is being alleged that such alleged rogue officers engage in transactional deals with such controversial cases as the alleged lynching of the girl in the Awka based hotel."

The rights body said: "According to reports, the young lady was at Club Mila, a nightclub reportedly owned by Cosmila Hotels in Awka, where one Gabriel Chinemere and friends, believed to be clubbers as well, allegedly started beating and molesting her for reasons yet unknown.

"The deceased, who hailed from Nnobi in Idemili South Local Council of Anambra State, was reportedly found dead and her corpse dumped in the swimming pool.

"The molestation allegedly took place in the presence of the club's manager, one Steven Junior, who allegedly directed the club security guards and bouncers to stand down and turn off the lights, while the girl was being beaten and dragged outside the club.

"The family of the deceased reported the matter to the Anambra State Police Command when they found their daughter dead in a swimming pool in the hotel. However, the police spokesman in the state, Tochukwu Ikenga, confirmed that some suspects were already in custody but failed to confirm their number and reveal their exact identity.

"The step by the Anambra State Government sealing off Cosmila Hotel, Awka, where Chinyere Awuda allegedly lost her life is a step in the right direction.

"However, beyond the sealing of the hotel, justice must be served on the matter. Governor Charles Chukwuma Soludo should be personally concerned about seeing to the logical action adopted by relevant law enforcement authority both at the Federal and state level."

HURIWA warned against delayed justice in the case.

It said: "Money should never be allowed to influence the ability of the police investigators to reach a verifiable and concrete determination of what led to her death. This is because the attempt to propagate a different tale from the

initial story of the cause of her death must never be allowed or else it will be seen that Nigeria Police Force has still not realized that life is sacred and inviolable.

"HURIWA asks the IGP to do everything within his power to demonstrate his competence and capacity to punish the offenders who should be found through scientific and forensic details to be generated by the investigators.

"Those who attended the party should be interviewed by the office of the IGP in camera so as to safeguard the confidentiality of their testimony. Justice must be served."



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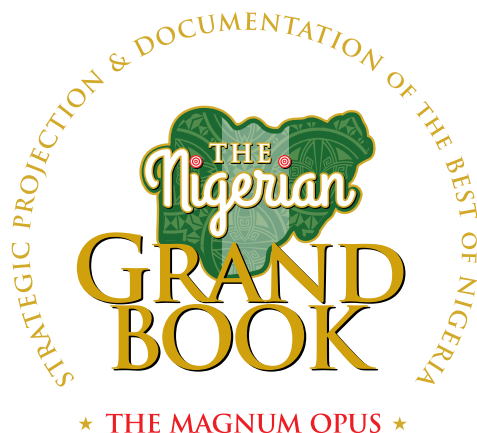
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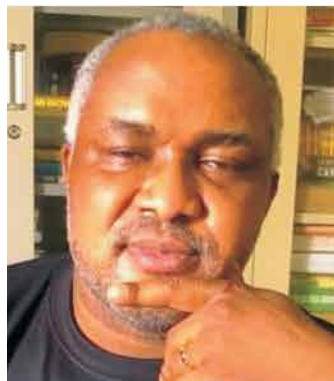


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Tinubu's Masterstroke on drug addiction

BY EMMANUEL ONWUBIKO



Echoing with a bang from my office TV set right before me is this familiar British-styled narration of a certain investigative reporting by a reporter from Skynews cable television- one of the world's most credible news outlets.

The item of their journalistic focus as I put pen to paper today, was precisely the frantic search for what the British parliamentarians do with cash that drops in from their political donors.

This report is all about letting us know that Great Britain practices Open Government Partnership which highlights the imperative of public officials adhering to the tenets of transparency, accountability and full disclosure of information on how public money is spent.

Fantastic as the investigative report sounded to me as a professional journalist, but as a Nigerian, I was actually focused on something else- a very terrible crime that happened not far away from where I was seated in Garki 2, Abuja, scribbling away this reflection in my office.

That seemingly unfathomable crime was a direct consequence of hard drug addiction by some three young students.

Well, as I thought deeply about why three university students could take away the precious life of another youth all because the three who were on hard drugs had no money to pay their victim for his services which he rendered to them as a cabman, I recollected that there is a nexus between this incident and the productive speech of deep thinking by President Ahmed Bola Tinubu few days back which I consider as a Masterstroke on how to tackle the effects of hard drugs addiction.

We will get to that soon. Speaking about the President's Masterstroke on confronting hard drug addictions, takes me to recollecting the fact that this struggling young Bolt driver murdered by these three drug addicts, never knew he actually drove his customers to pick up some more hard drugs somewhere in Abuja which drove them into overdrive of insanely deciding on their unfortunate trajectory.

The President of Nigeria spoke about the need for effective rehabilitation of drug addicts and avoidance of stigmatization of these persons. Ironically, the University whereby these killers came from, spoke to the same issue of rehabilitation which we will very soon come to see as we progress.

However, to think that this dastardly criminal act occurred barely days after the President, Ahmed Bola Tinubu, made some scintillating but deep thinking statements on what the society should do to rehabilitate hard drug addicts, offers us the rare privilege of once more appreciating the urgency of taking concrete steps to roll out comprehensive drug rehabilitation programmes and to give adequate funds to the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) for this singular purpose. Luckily, Nigeria has a very active and patriotic head of the NDLEA at the moment in the person of Brigadier-General Mohammed Buba Marwa (rtd).

As stated above, the President's speech at that event by the NDLEA was indeed a product of deep thinking. And on the issue of deep thinking, we recall that Daniel Kahneman, in his book, 'Thinking Fast and Slow', posits that we use two primary modes of thinking in order to process information and make decisions - System 1 and System 2.

System 1 is intuitive, unconscious, instant, automatic and emotional while System 2 is slow, rational, reasoning, conscious, reflective and deliberate.

Our active thoughts and actions vary depending on what mode is running. Slow, deliberate, logical and focused thinking is often used in solving complex problems. That type of thinking deliberate thinking is more reliable but we don't usually stop to reflect and make slow decisions because our responses are automatic.

Because of that, we need to hone our thinking skills. Let's go over

what exactly it takes to think deeply about complex problems; and the multiple levels of thought that are involved.

The author then went into some details on Shallow vs. Deliberate Thinkers and told us as follows: Most of our decisions in life are administered by our life experiences or the mental models we develop over the years (how we have been taught to think at home and at school). That is how we make sense of the world we live in.

The problem arises when we limit ourselves to just that thought process. That is what shallow thinkers do.

Shallow thinkers do not think beyond the immediate and the observable. They usually take information at face value and only look at immediate consequences.

They are not capable of looking at all sides of an issue or think deeply about the issue before making decisions or drawing conclusions - they solve a problem with one solution. And they typically believe they are right.

They also believe that their opinion is based on deep thinking because they genuinely believe that their opinion is based on truth and facts.

Whereas, deep thinkers look at the whole sequence of events and the consequences, the author concluded.

And so on that deep thinking speech of the President we recall that he spoke at an event organized by the very vibrant NDLEA headed by Marwa who ironically handed over the baton of leadership of Lagos state to the man who is today the President of Nigeria at the time General Marwa was on his way out as military Administrator and he, Bola Ahmed Tinubu was coming in as the democratically elected governor of Lagos state.

Besides, this bloodletting by the three undergraduates happened in Abuja almost at the same time that in far away Port Harcourt, Rivers state, the Director General of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) was warning youth Corpsers to absolutely say No to hard drugs.

Already, the management of Bingham University has declared that it has zero tolerance for drugs and other vices on the institution's campus.

Director of Public Affairs of the University, Mr Daburi B. Misal articulated the position of the institution in a press release issued on Monday.

"The attention of the Management of Bingham University has been drawn to a news report making the rounds on social media on 3 suspended students of the University being paraded by the authorities of the Abuja Police Command on the alleged killing of one Obasi Okeke, a Bolt driver, over a scuffle on transport fare of their trip to a destination in Abuja.

"The Management of the University hereby expresses its profound sadness over the development and states that the affected students were in March 2023 identified through the University's zero tolerance policy on drugs and suspended from the university for being in possession of Marijuana and other illicit substances.

"As required by our regulations, the students should have been taken to a rehabilitation centre by their guardians and would be taken back to the University only after certification by the University's psychiatrist. It was therefore shocking to see that students who were supposed to be in rehabilitation were being paraded by the Police in Abuja. While the University maintains zero tolerance for vices, the responsibility of bringing up children is a shared responsibility. The University will, however, continue to do its best to put them on the right path."

Also, the Director-General, NYSC, Brig.-Gen. Yusha'u Ahmed, at the weekend warned the 2023 Batch 'B' Stream One corps members to stay away from cultism and drug abuse, especially in the orientation camp.

He stressed that anyone who violates the scheme's rules and regulations would be appropriately sanctioned.

Ahmed gave the warning on Friday in a nationwide address to the corps members, who recently began their orientation exercise across the country.

As aforementioned, President Tinubu had said his administration would work closely with the NDLEA and its international partners to fight the menace of drug abuse.

He urged stakeholders to take a people-centred approach to address drug addiction, saying addicts are also humans who deserve understanding and support to recover from the downward path of drug abuse.

"I want to assure everyone, including our local and international partners, of this administration's unwavering support for the sustenance of drug control efforts," Tinubu said in his opening address at the national conference to mark this year's International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking, at the State House, Abuja.

The President, who was represented by the Secretary to Government of the Federation, George Akume, said interventions to address drug use and its associated consequences must recognize the individual and address the social stigma that comes with the menace.

Speaking of persons struggling with drug abuse, the President said, "These groups often face barriers in accessing health care and social services within society to address their drug use problems.

"Therefore, interventions to address drug use and its associated consequences need to be mindful of the fundamental individual. Stigma, both social and structural, which is one of the commonest barriers to access support and services must be removed."

He urged stakeholders to educate themselves and others on the dangers of drug abuse and the need to stop stigma and discrimination.

As we digest this President's Masterstroke on the handling of drug addicts, one important reminder to His Excellency Mr. President is to say that rehabilitation of drug addicts is highly capital-intensive just as the budgetary appropriation to the NDLEA is grossly insufficient to handle this arduous task, making it imperative that we advocate the granting of financial and operational autonomy to NDLEA.

I will conclude with just one example of how much it costs the government of the USA to rehabilitate drug addicts. For instance, around September 24th 2012, [www.drugfysrehab.com](#) quoted the popular Cable News Network's programme CNNMoney as releasing mind-boggling statistics to the effect that yearly, the cost of prescription drug abuse is about \$US70 billion. Approximately, \$US44 billion of the aforementioned amount is lost in productivity with another \$US8.2 billion only coming from justice costs. And addicts who shop around for doctors cost insurers \$US10,000 to \$US15,000 per person per year.

Dear Mr. President, rehabilitating drug addicts is a billion dollar project just as I end this article by thanking you for your deep thinking as earlier specified and to conclude by urging you, your government, the private sector and the international funding partner organizations to do all within their financial wherewithal or rather power/might to support the efforts of NDLEA in rehabilitating drug addicts.

I'm one of those Nigerians who are waiting to applaud President Tinubu should the six drug rehabilitation centres by the NDLEA be completed and commissioned timeously by President Tinubu.

***Emmanuel Onwubiko is head of the Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA) and was a National Commissioner of the National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria.**

Open letter to the President

BY KASSIM MUHAMMAD IBRAHIM

Dear sir! Your Excellency President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. I am writing to address a concerning matter, specifically, your approach regarding the ministerial list. As an avid and a concern citizen of Nigeria and also a follower of Nigerian politics, I have noticed some similarities between your approach and that of your predecessor.

Firstly, I would like to commend you for the positive policies and reforms that have been implemented under your leadership so far. Your commitment to the progress and development of our great nation has been evident, and it is

commendable. I appreciate your efforts in keeping our policies on track and focusing on issues that matter to the Nigerian people.

However, I cannot help but express my concerns about the ministerial list and the potential implications it may have for our country. It is crucial to learn from the mistakes of the past and avoid repeating them, as they only serve to hinder progress and impede the growth of our nation. I implore you to consider this matter with utmost caution and prudence.

Our great nation requires capable and competent individuals who will put the interests of the people first. It is vital to select ministers based on merit, expertise, and a genuine commitment to serving the Nigerian people. Political

affiliations and personal interests should take a backseat to ensuring the best possible team is assembled to address the various challenges facing our nation.

I understand that political considerations are often a reality in the formation of any government. However, it is essential to strike a balance between political interests and the long-term welfare of our nation. It is my hope that you will prioritize the latter and avoid falling into the trap of sacrificing the welfare of the people for short-term political gains.

As a mentor to many politicians and the number one citizen of the country, I believe you have the power to set a precedent and lead by example. Your decisions in forming the ministerial

list will serve as a reflection of your commitment to a better Nigeria. Let us not forget that the success of our nation lies in the hands of capable and dedicated individuals who are willing to put the country before personal ambitions.

I urge you, Your Excellency, to approach the ministerial list with caution, wisdom, and a genuine desire to serve the Nigerian people. By selecting capable individuals who prioritize the interests of the nation, you will ensure that our great country continues to progress on the right track. Let us not repeat the mistakes of the past but forge a brighter future for Nigeria.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I wish you the best in



your endeavors for the betterment of our beloved country.

Yours sincerely,
Kassim Muhammad Ibrahim (DBA,SRF)

Nigerian universities and e-learning

On more than one occasion, the National Universities Commission (NUC) has stated that Nigeria cannot efficiently operate e-learning programmes in its universities due to lack of infrastructure, electricity supply and internet access. These shortcomings will require some time to address. Sadly, lack of infrastructure and electricity supply has been the bane of our existence in Nigeria for many decades now - with internet access joining the list more recently. These have affected not just e-learning but, every other sector, industry, and the general quality of life in Nigeria.

The entry of Coronavirus pandemic in Nigeria and the lockdown that followed in the first half of 2019 highlighted the critical need for an online alternative for almost every sector.

At the onset of the lockdown, even developed countries struggled to transit seamlessly to e-learning, and many developing countries could not. In Nigeria, the private education space adopted a pseudo solution for e-learning. However, majority of the learning population were left stranded. Even in private schools, the factors listed above made e-learning less efficient and more expensive than it should be.

The need for e-learning or online education was not only occasioned by the lockdown or inability of many schools to operate physically. E-learning is the future of formal education. For example, in a cosmopolitan university that cannot accommodate all students on campus, we often have students commuting to and from the campus from far-off places. Online classes should be an option to make learning for such students more convenient. It will also allow the schools to reach potential students across state and country lines. Currently, Nigeria has now less than 92 public universities and 79 private universities. Most of the public universities lack basic requirements for efficient learning. There are not enough computers, and most students cannot afford laptops.

Where there are available devices, an epileptic or absence of electricity supply means devices cannot be powered or used as needed. Additionally, battery life is always at risk with erratic charging and sometimes sub-optimal voltage. Alternate power supply is available but requires additional financial capacity. Internet data is still relatively expensive in Nigeria, and we do not have enough fibre network across the country (or even in states) to provide the seamless streaming required for online educational interaction.

Given these challenges, the NUC needs a plan to address these issues for e-learning to be fully adopted. Currently, lecturers and students use personal resources to augment the almost non-existent infrastructure. These personalised solutions are not secure or properly coordinated. They are also costly. Some options to mitigate these infrastructure and cost challenges include the NUC or educational institutions entering partnerships with leading infrastructure providers to procure equipment in bulk and take advantage of economies of scale. Corporate bodies and multinationals can also devote some of their CSR budgets to enabling e-learning in tertiary institutions which act as a feeder into the pool from which they search for and recruit talent. Indeed a few companies in the Telecoms, Technology and Banking sectors have supported some universities by providing free Wi-Fi hotspots. These gestures are, however, merely drops in the ocean!

It is also pertinent to note that Infrastructure is just one aspect of the system. Another significant aspect is the content. To successfully implement and adopt e-learning, the content needs to be prepared in suitable e-formats and modules. Platforms for testing, recording, assignments also need to be created and populated. Yet another aspect which is probably the most critical is training and change management. Teachers that will deliver training via e-learning and the students who will interact via this mode need to embrace change.

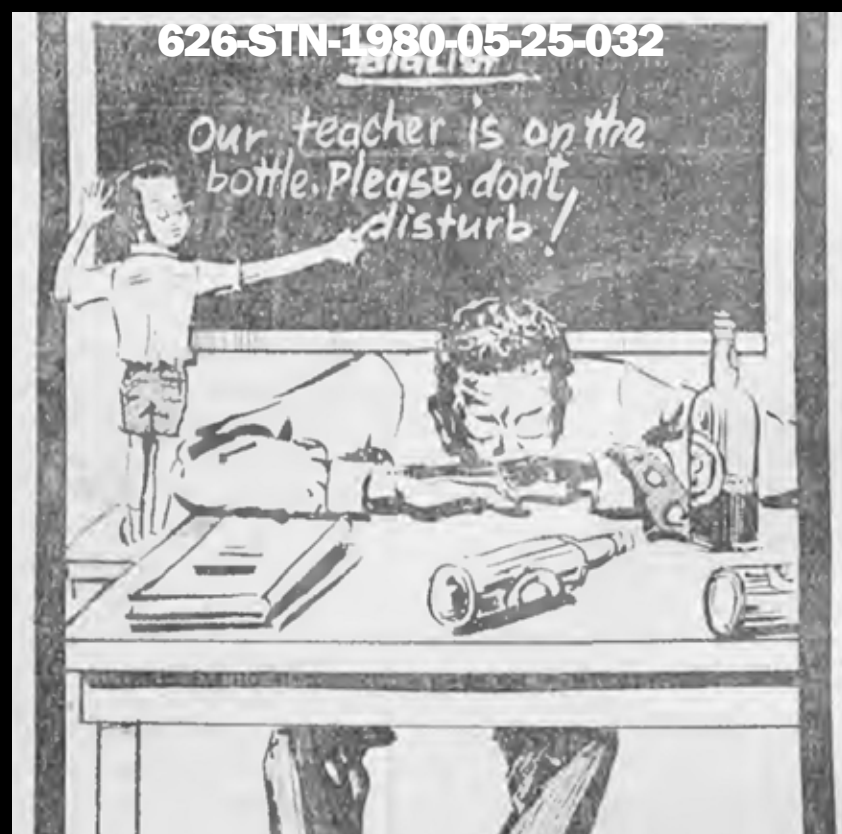
Finally, the entire e-learning system must pass integrity and quality tests. This is crucial for our accreditations from an e-learning system to be viewed as credible anywhere in the world. Putting all of this in place requires planning, investment, and resources. This will take a bit of time but obviously should be prioritised over an acceptable timeframe as it is evident that the rest of the world is not waiting or slowing down. A point to note is that of sixteen countries with the best conditions for implementing e-learning in the world, ten were ranked as having the top education systems in general. Given this interesting correlation between the quality of education systems in a country and their ability to implement e-learning successfully, a disturbing question comes up. Is implementing e-learning in our universities akin to merely putting lipstick on a pig? Whatever it is, we cannot delay e-learning. The time for a thorough overhaul of our educational system is now!

“

To successfully implement and adopt e-learning, the content needs to be prepared in suitable e-formats and modules. Platforms for testing, recording, assignments also need to be created and populated.

”

Cartoons from our Archives



626-DTN-1989-04-01-006



Words on Marble



Aminu Kano

: “The road to freedom is full of thorns and fire...”



Chimamanda Adichie:

Funmilayo Ransom-Kuti: “As for the charges against me, I am unconcerned. I am beyond their timid lying morality and so I am beyond caring.”



Kwame Nkrumah:

“Action without thought is empty; Thought without action is blind” in food.”

Soldiers detain Niger president, Tinubu, world leaders condemn coup bid

**ANDREW OROLUA,
WITH AGENCY RE-
PORT, AND UKPONO
UKPONG**

President Mohamed Bazoum of Niger Republic was being detained in the Presidential Palace in Niamey, the capital, by soldiers in circumstances neighbouring countries and world leaders condemned as an attempted coup.

Details of what led to President Bazoum's seizure and detention by his own guards remained sketchy as of press time.

The United Nations (UN), United States (US), European Union (EU), African Union (AU), ECOWAS yesterday denounced any attempt to seize power in Niger.

The Palace housing President Bazoum was still blocked by angry soldiers of the Presidential Guard at the time of filing this report and several ministries that were affected by the blockade remained locked as of press time.

The disgruntled soldiers sealed off access to the president's residence and offices. The soldiers also refused to release the president.

There were fears of a coup as the guards detained the president, but in city and suburbs normal businesses and activities were going on.

The army has reportedly given the renegade soldiers ultimatum just as the president's office tweeted that the guards unsuccessfully tried to get support from the military in their "anti-republican" efforts. Sources said talks were underway to ensure that it did not turn to a shoot-out between loyalists and renegades.

Reports say the immediate former president, Mohammed Issoufou, and other former presidents are currently involved in talks to stop the situation from escalating.

"The President of the Republic and his family are doing well. The Army and the National Guard are ready to attack" those involved in this incident, the president's office added.

The landlocked West African state has experienced four coups since independence from France in 1960, as well as numerous attempted coups.

President Bazoum, who was democratically elected in 2021, is a close ally of France.

The country's last coup occurred in February 2010, overturning then President Mamadou Tandja.

Niger is grappling with two jihadist campaigns – one in the south-west, which swept in from neighbouring Mali in 2015, and the other in the south-east, involving jihadists based in north-eastern Nigeria.

Militant groups allied to

both al-Qaeda and Islamic State are active in the country.

Two neighbouring countries, Mali and Burkina Faso, have experienced coups recently triggered by jihadist uprisings.

Nigeria, another neighbouring country, immediately condemned the action as unpleasant developments.

President Bola Tinubu swiftly reacted to the reports that some elements in the military were holding Bazoum captive.

President Tinubu, in a statement he personally signed as Chairman, ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, unequivocally condemned the development.

The statement entitled 'Unpleasant developments in Niger Republic', read: "Information filtering in from the Republic of Niger indicates some unpleasant developments around the country's highest political leadership.

"It should be quite clear to all players in the Republic of Niger that the leadership of the ECOWAS Region and all lovers of democracy around the world will not tolerate any situation that incapacitates the democratically elected government of the country.

"The ECOWAS leadership will not accept any action that impedes the smooth functioning of legitimate authority in Niger or any part of West Africa.

"I wish to say that we are closely monitoring the situation and developments in Niger and we will do everything within our powers to ensure democracy is firmly planted, nurtured, well rooted and thrives in our region.

"I am in close consultation with other leaders in our region, and we shall protect our hard-earned democracy in line with the universally acceptable principle of constitutionalism.

"As the Chairperson of ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, I state without equivocation that Nigeria stands firmly with the elected government in Niger and equally conveys the absolute resolve of leaders in our sub-region that we shall not waiver or flinch on our stand to defend and preserve constitutional order."

According to Reuters, a military takeover in the former French colony could further complicate Western efforts to help countries in the Sahel region fight a jihadist insurgency that has spread from Mali over the past decade.

Meanwhile, President Tinubu met his Beninese counterpart, Patrice Talon, over the attempted coup.

At the meeting with Talon at State House, Abuja,

President Tinubu told journalists that the meeting dealt with ways to resolve the problems that caused the coup attempt in Niger Republic

The Nigerian President said the Beninese President was heading to Niamey to see things and report back to him as the

Chairman of ECOWAS.

On his part, President Talon said "the situation is serious enough that ECOWAS and President Tinubu as the President, and the President of Nigeria, a neighborhood country of Niger Republic, with Benin Republic of which I am the President, also a neighbor-

hood country of Niger, for us to take it seriously and act quickly.

"I believe that all means will be used, if necessary, to restore constitutional order in Niger, but the ideal would be for everything to happen in peace and harmony.

"So, as the president has

committed, the mediation actions will be reinforced this very evening so that this situation can be settled in peace, between brothers because even when what is not acceptable is done, it is necessary that in peace, we can correct this. This is our first option and we think it will be a success."



Yobe State Governor, Mai Mala Buni distributes palliatives to persons with special needs to cushion the hardship caused by the increase in fuel price nationwide, in Damaturu...yesterday.

NLC strike notice, contempt of court –FG

**ANDREW OROLUA ,
ABUJA .**

Federal Ministry of Justice said that the seven-day notice issued by Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) to embark on strike is in contempt of the order of National Industrial Court (NIC) and would attract adverse consequences if they went ahead with the industrial action.

A statement signed by Solicitor-General of the Federation/Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Justice, Mrs. B.E. Jedy-Agba, referred to media reports which indicate "that the National President (Joe Ajaero) and Secretary-General (Emmanuel Ugboaja) of the Ni-

geria Labour Congress (NLC) endorsed a 7-day notice of their intention to embark on a nationwide strike action from 2nd August 2023 if the demands of the labour unions are not met."

The Ministry said it is pertinent to alert the NLC and the general public to the pendency of suit number: NICN/ABJ/158/2023 – Federal Government of Nigeria & Anor V. Nigeria Labour Congress & Anor before the National Industrial Court, wherein His Lordship, Anuwe, J., on 5th June 2023 granted an injunctive order restraining Nigeria Labour Congress and Trade Union Congress from embarking on the planned industrial action/or strike of any nature, pending the hearing

and determination of the pending Motion on Notice."

The said motion on notice also prayed for an order of interlocutory injunction for parties to maintain status quo pending the determination of the dispute or issues submitted to the court, she explained, adding that the said Motion on Notice is still pending.

Jedy-Agba noted: "It is noted that the issues (removal of fuel subsidy, hike in prices of petrol and consequential increase in cost of living etc) which precipitated the above court action, are the very same issues over which NLC has now issued another strike notice.

"The NLC has submitted to the jurisdiction of the court and is being repre-

sented by the reputable law firm of Femi Falana, SAN.

"It is therefore our minimum expectation that NLC will allow the courts perform their constitutional roles rather than resorting to self-help and undermining the orders of the court.

"We note with dismay that this latest strike notice is consistent with the inexplicable disdain which the NLC leadership has visited on the authority of the court in recent times following earlier inciting and derogatory remarks made by the NLC President against the court.

"Indeed, the avowed penchant of the leadership of the union for casting aspersions on the Judiciary is quite worrisome and concerning."

Emefiele: DSS probes conduct of operatives in Lagos court

**ANDREW OROLUA,
ABUJA.**

Department of State Services (DSS) has commenced investigation into the ugly incident that occurred on Tuesday, July 25, 2023, at Federal High Court, Ikoyi, Lagos where its personnel manhandled Nigeria Correctional Service (NCoS) officials over the custody of detained ex-Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Godwin Emefiele.

In a statement by its spokesman, Peter Afunanya, DSS said

it has noted the incident that took place between its staff and those of NCoS).

Apparently distancing itself from the conduct of its personnel, DSS said: "(i) the incident was unfortunate and does not in any way reflect the professional disposition of the DSS; "(ii) the Service did not and would never encourage the incident under reference;

"(iii) The Service has tremendous respect for the Judiciary as an Arm and Institution of Government and will not go out of its way to undermine it."

The DSS said it recognised

the Judiciary as a critical component in nation building, national development and security management.

Also, the Service insisted that it has robust working relationship with sister security and law enforcement agencies including the NCoS.

While noting that the personnel from both agencies exhibited undue overzealousness, the Service said it initiated detailed investigations into the matter to identify the role played by specific persons as well as undertake disciplinary actions, if necessary, and

drawing some lessons going forward.

It was a show of shame at the court as DSS personnel engage their NCoS counterparts in a free for all over who would take custody of Emefiele after the court granted him bail in the sum of N20million. He waited for a while inside the court to see to the perfection of his bail.

But as he stepped out of the court room, DSS operatives grabbed him even as an NCoS official moved to take him to a correctional centre pending the perfection of his bail.



Acting Inspector-General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun (right) with others, during the unveiling of the Police-VGS Quick Emergency Reporting and Response System, a smart policing initiative, at the Force Headquarters, Abuja...yesterday.

Bloodbath looming in Adamawa over alleged injustice to Vomnis

TOM GARBA,
YOLA

The people of Vomni community, Jada local government of Adamawa State have decried the ethnic ostracism and exclusion being meted to them by Damti people who, they said, they accommodated and gave succor in the past.

A statement by Mr. Talmon Jatau on behalf of Vomni Concerned Elders, noted that the community has been reeling under excruciating marginalization as alleged strangers are now appointed to take charge of their traditional institutions.

In an open letter to Governor Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri, a copy of which was sighted by our reporter, the community sought the governor's intervention in order to stave off an imminent confrontation as they vowed to resist the incursion of 'strangers' into their rulership.

Jatau noted that Vomni tribe has over 50,000 descendants cutting across Jada and Fufere local governments of the state, regretting that despite their numerical strength, those he described as "fifth columnists" will not allow them enjoy rights of self-determination.

"Vomni tribe/people with a population of over 50,000 living in Jada local government with spread into Fufere local government area, are peace-loving people who have been in bondage in their land under Ganye Chieftdom for over 150 years.

"From the old Ganye local government, formerly known as Koma District, was the only District that was split into two Districts only of recent under the Fresh Air Government, while her counterparts like Yelwa District, Sugu District, Mbullo District etc. have developed into two or three Districts except Koma because of persistent and deliberate insistence of un-democratic elements who vow to keep the Vomni people in perpetual bondage.

"It was the height when the Vomni people, in particular Tuli village, lost her village head in 2021 July. Instead of appointing a Vomni man in acting capacity, a tenant in their land was imposed on them. Vomni people are truly peace-loving people; when they took their complain to the authorities no one was willing to listen to them. Instead were promised that they will be given the substantive village head that they are aware it is Vomni entitlement.

"When Vomni District was created, an Acting District Head who was not a Vomni man was appointed again and our people complained to the authorities, but they were not given listening ear. Again, another promise that a Vomni man will surely be appointed as substantive. Deliberately there was no plan for fairness and justice," Jatau said.



Jatau noted that the marginalization of Vomni people could be traced to the era of the late Col. Yohana Madaki's military administration where he appealed to them to accommodate Koma Damti people when they were brought down from the mountain top for rehabilitation.

He noted that as people with high level of compassion, accommodation and milk of human kindness, they accepted Koma Damti people and gave them farmlands so that the latter can settle down to farm.

Jatau narrated: "When Late Yohana Madaki visited Koma with the mindset of rehabilitating the people, the Vomni people were approached to allow the Koma Damti, a mountain top people, access to Vomni land for farming and settlement.

"The Vomni people, without hesitation, consented and gave the Damti people lands for farming etc. Over time, the Damti people who came down from the mountains, started claiming ownership of Vomni land and were creating and fomenting trouble, but Vomni people refused to respond to their provocations.

"When their troubles became too much, one of the Vomni elder statesman in the land had to take legal action and secured documents for some of the lands...the conflict is still unsettled.

"Additionally, Vomni District was created, and the headquarters was sited at Komni, instead of Tuli, the headquarters of Vomni, deliberately to enslave and provoke the Vomni

people." Vomni elders were not consulted for any inputs; the authorities were misled by those who wanted to create seed of discord and communal crises in Vomni land to site the headquarters at Komni. Our people complained for the third time but we're denied listening ears.

"Finally, the process of the appointment of the district head was stage-managed and hurriedly done because as at the time the process commenced, the Tuli village head was not appointed after series of applications, interview and screening.

"When the Vomni District was created, it had four village heads under it, which are Tuli, Deggi, Samlo and Konglo. Only Deggi and Konglo had substantive village heads while Tuli and Samlo had acting village heads, meaning elections cannot be held for only two people, and one of them was contesting for the position.

"The guidelines were that those acting will not vote or be voted for; meaning only Deggi and Konglo, who are substantive appointees, can vote.

"Vomni people complained the unfair treatment and injustices they have suffered over the years, been ruled by strangers in their land, but as usual no one was willing to listen to our plea and cry for fairness and justice.

"The authorities, against the guidelines, went ahead by screening and held elections for two people. The two substantive District Heads, one out of the two was even contesting for the position.

"This observation was made but the authorities did not give listening ear to the complaints, but elections were carried out against the guidelines and appointment was done in a hurry with no recourse to the guidelines and complaints tabled by the Vomni people.

"The Vomni people on hearing the news about the announcement of the appointment, organized themselves and travelled to Ganye to see the royal father, His Royal Highness, but were denied access by those around him.

"Thereafter a written complaint was forwarded to His Royal Highest the Gangwari on the matter and copied to relevant stakeholders and Government agencies.

"It was after the written complaint that the Vomni people were invited and persuaded to accept the appointment and decision. This was the height of injustice for the Vomni and the people can no longer accept the decision to enslave them after over 150 years of bondage in our land.

"Since the announcement, there has been tension and distrust in Vomni District that requires urgent intervention of His Excellency the Executive Governor, the Fresh Air Governor, so that the Vomni people can experience Fresh Air under your able leadership before the situation deteriorates to communal clashes."

EFCC, South African counterpart seek deeper cooperation to tackle economic crimes

Acting Chairman, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Abdulkarim Chukkol, and his South Africa Priority Crime Investigation Directorate (DPCI) counterpart, Lt. Gen. Senaba Mosipi yesterday canvassed need for deeper cooperation.

Chukkol reiterated the Commission's commitment to working with other law enforcement organizations in Africa in tackling the menace of cybercrime, money laundering and other economic and financial crimes.

The EFCC chairman stated this at the Commission's headquarters, when a senior delegation from the DPCI, led by Mosipi visited the Commission.

He stated that the EFCC is honoured to receive the delegation as a significant step "towards fostering a deeper understanding and collaboration between our esteemed agencies".

Chukkol added: "The EFCC actually recognizes the track record and unwavering

commitment demonstrated by your organization, the DPCI, most especially in prioritizing and combating serious crimes that threaten the fabric of our societies.

"As we all gather here today, united by our shared mission to safeguard our nations from the clutches of economic and financial crimes, we recognize the crucial role that knowledge exchange and cooperation play in strengthening our collective efforts. These challenges that we face are quite complex and multifaceted requiring a holistic and collaborative approach."

Chukkol added that the EFCC places a premium on cooperation and collaboration with law enforcement and anti-corruption agencies in Africa.

On his part, Mosipi stated that the delegation was in the Commission to develop new pathways in tackling economic and financial crime issues and other related offences bedeviling society.

Reps want CBN to restore microfinance banks' operational licenses

TOM OKPE,
ABUJA

House of Representatives has urged the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to restore operational licenses earlier revoked from 47 Microfinance Banks across the country, pending conclusion of investigation.

This followed adoption of a motion sponsored by Rep James Shuaibu Barka (Adamawa) at plenary yesterday.

Moving the motion, Barka noted that on May 22, 2023, the then Governor of CBN, Godwin Emefiele revoked operational license of the 47. These included Biyama Microfinance Bank Ltd in Hong Local Government Area in Adamawa State.

He said: "The reasons cited in the communication include that the banks were either inactive, insolvent, failed to render returns, closed shop, or ceased to carry on the type of banking business for which they were licensed for more than six months in contravention of the Banks and Other Financial Institutions Act (BOFIA) 2020.

"The closure of Biyama Microfinance Bank, which is the only community bank in the Hong Local Government Area, has caused undue

hardship to the people who depended on banking and financial services offered by the bank for their small and medium enterprises."

He expressed worry that closing down the only financial institution in a place where the people go through so much hardship to earn stipends to deposit or to get small loans to run small businesses for survival, would only frustrate them further and may push them into crime in order to survive.

The lawmaker said: "After the recapitalisation of the Bank to the required N50 million share capital, it never ceased operating in line with BOFIA and has been making all required reports and returns."

He lamented that if the situation is not urgently resolved, the people will resort to keeping their money at home, which makes them easy prey for armed robbery.



L-R: Prof. Charles Esimone, Vice Chancellor, Nnamdi Azikiwe University (UNIZIK), Dr. Ubon Udoh, Managing Director, ASR Africa during the groundbreaking for the construction of ASR Student Centre within the university campus on Tuesday, July 25, 2023 in Awka, Anambra State.

Why we invested in Bayelsa media outlets –Gov Diri

AMOS OKIOMA,
YENAGOA.

Governor of Bayelsa State, Senator Douye Diri, said the decision of his administration to construct the massive Ernest Ikoli Media Complex in Yenagoa was borne out of the important role the media plays in societal development.

Speaking during a visit to the complex, which houses the three state-owned media outlets - Radio Bayelsa, Niger Delta Television (NDTV) and New Waves Newspaper - yesterday, Governor Diri expressed satisfaction with the newly installed digital broadcast equipment, which, he said, were the best in the industry.

A statement by his Chief Press Secretary (CPS), Mr.

Daniel Alabrah quoted him as saying during a live interview on NDTV that as the Fourth Estate of the Realm, the media remains a very important component of the state and the society at large, adding that his administration will treat it with the seriousness it deserves.

On the three senatorial road projects, the governor described them as very crucial to the state, saying they not only provide access of the rural communities to the state capital but will also open up the state's economic zones.

He said it is unfortunate to see people play politics with these important projects, wondering why some opposition politicians do not seek expert opinion on areas they are not knowledgeable about but rather make ignorant comments.

Responding to a question on the issue of flooding, he said the state government was doing everything within its power to tackle the menace and called on the Federal Government to take practical steps, such as building of dams, to check the release of water from the dams outside the country.

His words: "I saw the level of decay in the physical infrastructure, especially of the radio station arising from a storm. The television station was far away in Gbarantoru and knowing the importance of the media, I said something had to be done.

"When we inaugurated this structure (in February 2022), there were a lot of naysayers who said we were inaugurating an empty structure. But today I am happy I am live here on

NDTV and I am seeing very modern equipment that are arguably comparable to the best in the industry.

"The three senatorial roads are important to us. That is why we are investing so much in them. It is unfortunate that some people are playing politics with it by making comments on areas they do not have the requisite knowledge rather than seeking the opinion of experts."

Governor Diri also visited Radio Bayelsa where he partook in a live programme.

Luck smiled on some ad hoc staff undergoing training at the television station when he enquired about their status and then directed the Commissioner for Information to ensure they are given immediate employment in the state civil service.

APC NWC member, Lukman, resigns, cites injustice

TOM OKPE,
ABUJA

Fresh controversy is rocking the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) as the party's National Vice Chairman, North-west, Dr Salihu Lukman, has resigned his position as member of the National Working Committee (NWC), less than a fortnight after National Chairman, Sen. Abdullahi Adamu, and National Secretary, Sen. Iyiola Omisore, also resigned, the former in controversial circumstances.

Lukman cited what he described as the atmosphere in the party as reason for his resignation, saying that it is completely at variance with the founding vision of forming a progressive party.

Lukman disclosed this in a letter dated July 26, 2023 addressed to the party's Acting National Chairman, Senator Abubakar Kyari.

Daily Times had reported that the

Kaduna-born politician and former Director General (DG), Progressives Governors' Forum, (PGF) vehemently opposed the speculation that immediate past Governor of Kano state, Dr Abdulahi Umar Ganduje is being propped up to assume position of the National Chairman.

Lukman insisted that moving the position of National Chairman from the North-Central geopolitical zone to the North-west was suicidal, unjust and insensitive.

The letter read: "I hereby kindly resign my position as National Vice Chairman, North-West of our great party, the All-Progressives Congress (APC).

"My resignation is with immediate effect, which becomes necessary given my conviction that the atmosphere in the party is completely at variance with the founding vision of forming a progressive party.

"Rather than remaining in the leadership of the party and become

a source of distraction for leaders, especially the young government of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, it is better to excuse myself and take time off from politics.

"I will however retain my membership of the party in the hope that our leaders, especially President Tinubu, will retract from acts that will be unjust and illegal, which is crucial to any claim of being democratic or progressive whether as politicians, or as patriotic Nigerians.

"I wish to convey my sincere gratitude to our leaders in Kaduna State, especially Mallam Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai for finding me worthy of nomination to serve at the highest level of the party's leadership.

"I do hope all our leaders will appreciate that I am left with no option in the circumstance. I wish the party and all our leaders, especially President Tinubu all the best and will continue to give my modest support towards success of the party from the background."

Federal Fire Service has cleared backlog of arrears of not less than 2,000 of its personnel from 2016 till date

This was disclosed in a statement signed by National Public Relations Officer of the Service, Abraham Paul and issued to journalists in Abuja.

He described the payment as a remarkable move to showcase the Comptroller General's commitment to better employee welfare.

The statement read: "Comptroller General, Federal Fire Service, Engr. Jaji Abudulganiyu, has fulfilled his promise to pay all outstanding salary and promotion arrears owed to the men of the service.

"A total of over 2000 personnel were the beneficiaries of this payment, with their arrears covering 2016 to date ranging from 1-5 months and one year respectively.

"This laudable action comes as a result of Abudulganiyu's dedication to improving staff welfare since assuming office.

"During the celebration of his 100 days in office, Engr. Jaji Abudulganiyu vowed to prioritize the settlement of all pending arrears and enhance the welfare of the Federal Fire Service staff.

"Demonstrating his unwavering commitment, he has now successfully followed through on this promise, ensuring that all arrears' payments are made to the deserving officers.

"The settlement of outstanding arrears not only provides much-needed financial relief to the affected individuals but also serves as an acknowledgement of their dedicated service to the Federal Fire Service. It

signifies the value placed on their efforts by the leadership and reinforces the importance of recognizing and rewarding employees for their hard work and commitment."

While noting that the Comptroller General's proactive approach towards improving staff welfare extends beyond the settlement of arrear payments, the statement noted that he has implemented various measures to enhance the overall well-being of the entire workforce.

"His leadership style prioritizes the needs and concerns of the staff, aiming to create a conducive and supportive environment for optimal productivity and job satisfaction.

"Under his guidance, the Federal Fire Service has witnessed positive changes that have positively impacted both the staff and the organization as a whole. From comprehensive training programs to acquiring state-of-the-art firefighting equipment, Engr. Jaji Abudulganiyu has demonstrated his commitment to transforming the service into a world-class institution.

"The settlement of outstanding arrears of the affected officers is not just a fulfilment of a promise; it is a testament to Engr Jaji O Abudulganiyu's vision for the Federal Fire Service. By prioritizing employee welfare and recognizing their contributions, he is fostering a culture of appreciation, motivation, and excellence within the service."



Makinde swears-in SSG, other appointees

Forgery allegation against me, laughable -Delta deputy gov

NOSA ÀKEÑZUA, ASABA

Deputy Governor of Delta State, Sir Monday Onyeme has debunked the accusation of forgery laid against him by the Social Democratic Party (SDP) governorship candidate, Chief Kenneth Gbagi, describing it as spurious, unfounded and laughable, just as he urged media outfits to support the truth at all times.

Sir Onyeme made this clarification yesterday in his office at Government House, Asaba, when the management team of Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), Asaba, visited him to felicitate with him on his victory at the election and

successful inauguration.

Onyeme said: "I want to thank you for doing a very good report on me. This is very good because if you know this much about me, then I am sure you will be able to respond when you get some information that is very untrue.

"Recently, there is a piece of information flying everywhere that the Deputy Governor was dismissed from the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) for forgery. Why some of us did not talk, is laughable.

"Forgery of what? What will somebody like me forge? Is it a certificate or financial transaction?" Onyeme queried.

The Deputy Governor

wondered when Chief Gbagi set up any panel that probed and suspended him from the NOUN, just as he questioned the weak laws of the nation which gave room for such spurious and unfounded accusation by a supposed respected Nigerian under oath in a law court.

While commending the management of NTA for the investigation on his person, the deputy governor urged media outfits to support the truth at all times, stressing that when some false information was used and spread by media outfits over time, those who were not privy to the truth may believe them.

Onyeme said the state

was well-positioned to partner with NTA and other media outfits.

Earlier, the General Manager, NTA, Asaba, Mrs. Phil Obanor said the visit was to felicitate with Sir Onyeme and Governor Sheriff Oborvwo on their victory at the poll and successful inauguration.

Mrs. Obanor said the present administration was loaded with brains that could take the government to higher grounds and commended the media-friendly disposition of the State government.

She described NTA as a strategic partner positioned to put in place all its machinery to publicize the activities of the State government.

Abuja Markets Management staff protest over leadership crisis

UKPONO UKPONG

Distressed staff members of Abuja Markets Management Limited (AMML) yesterday staged a peaceful protest to the gate of the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) pleading with the Permanent Secretary, Olusade Adesola, to expedite actions on the recent leadership crisis rocking AMML.

The staff who marched around the premises with various placards calling out the embattled and sacked former Managing Director (MD), Abubakar Faruk, said that since the inception of the leadership crisis, AMML's office at Gudu District has become a death trap.

They said staff now live in unprecedented fear and tension, following the deadly 'landmines' that the crisis has subtly created.

Recall that for the past two weeks, AMML has remained a theatre of dramas, after Faruk was sacked following the resolution of the Shareholders, with the endorsement of the Group Man-

aging Director of Abuja Investments Company Ltd, Abubakar Maina (AICL) the supervising agency over AMML.

Speaking on behalf of the protesting staff, Musa Sheleng, who is the Chairman, Senior Staff Association of Statutory Corporations and Government-owned Companies (SSASCGOC), AMML branch, decried the negative effects of the leadership tussle on the staff.

He noted that staff members no longer feel safe, due to the heavy presence of security operatives that have continued to besiege the office.

Sheleng also demanded that the rift be settled once and for all to allow staff put in their best in discharge of their duties.

According to him, "We are here to thank the Permanent Secretary for all he has been doing towards resolving the issues. But we are saying that he needs to do more, because we are living in bandage.

"We are in an office where we can't express ourselves. Some of us have

been here as old as the company itself, but now the decision has brought enmity, and we are living in fears. You don't know what happens as you come to work.

"It has been one episode of trouble to another. We want FCTA to stamp its final authority over the matter. We are aware of the Court cases, but we are saying the Permanent Secretary should come to the aid of AMML staff, so that we can have a lasting solution. The facilities and markets and staff are suffering."



Israel's judicial overhaul sparks military crisis as number of refusing reservists grows

As Israel plunges deeper into crisis after the country's parliament passed the first bill of a controversial judicial overhaul, thousands of Israeli army reservists – the backbone of the Israeli military – are threatening not to show up for work. And Israel's leaders are sounding alarms about the country's readiness for war.

The law that came into effect on Wednesday took away the court's power to veto government decisions based on them being "unreasonable." Millions opposed the change, according to opinion polls, which critics said would erode the independence of the courts and harm Israel's democracy.

"At the current point in time, the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) is competent," IDF Chief Spokesperson Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari told reporters on Tuesday, but he acknowledged that the country's military readiness could be affected.

"If reservists do not show up for a long time, there will be damage to the army's competence. It is a gradual process that will be affected according to the presence of the reservists," he said.

The threat is unprecedented in its scope, experts say, and the military has pleaded with reservists to remain in their posts.

Ahmad Gharabli/AFP/Getty Images

"The IDF needs you – only together will we protect our common home," IDF Chief of General Staff Herzl Halevi said Tuesday, addressing reservists who refused to show up for service.

Ad Feedback



Nearly 10,000 military reservists said before the passage of the controversial "reasonableness" bill on Monday that they would refuse to volunteer for duty if it was passed. And the number of refusers is growing, according to Hagari.

US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin spoke by phone with Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant and reiterated the US' commitment to Israel's security. But he also said that "broad consensus through political dialogue" was critical to maintain democracy.

Chuck Freilich, a senior researcher at The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) in Tel Aviv who served for over 20 years in Israel's national security establishment, said that Israel is at a historical "inflection point," in which "extreme measures may have to be taken to endure Israel's fundamental character of democracy."

Speaking about reservists refus-

ing, Freilich said that "on the one hand, it is admirable." But on the other hand, he said, "it is a horrible thing for the IDF." It was remarkable, he added, that one of the world's better militaries "is threatening to come apart at the seams over domestic changes."

When the vote passed on Monday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called on the IDF to "stay out of any political controversy," saying that "the call for refusal harms the security of all citizens of the country."

The 'backbone' of Israel's military A country that went to war shortly after its founding in 1948, Israel has fought seven wars and engaged in several other smaller conflicts with its neighbors.

Every Israeli over the age of 18 who is Jewish, Druze or Circassian must serve in the military, an institution that is deeply entrenched in many Israelis' sense of identity and nationhood.



Ukraine MP under criminal investigation over Maldives holiday

Ukrainian authorities are investigating whether a member of parliament broke the law when he took a family holiday to the Maldives.

Officials are banned from travelling abroad on holiday, while men of conscription age need special permission to leave the country.

The security service opened a criminal case to assess whether Yuriy Aristov gave false information to authorities.

He could face up to three years in jail if convicted, investigators say.

The State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) and the Security Service of Ukraine have opened a criminal case to establish whether Mr Aristov gave false information in applying to leave the country.

The SBI said initial investigations found that Mr Aristov had been on the private island of Ithaafushi in the Maldives in mid-July with his wife and children, when he was registered as being on sick leave.

He was abroad from 5 June to 22 July, having first left for a three-

day business trip to Poland. He was first spotted in the Maldives by Ukrainian media.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned public servants in a speech on Tuesday that any betrayal of the country's interests would trigger "fury".

"When you constantly see and feel the moral strength gained for Ukraine by our warriors, our people, who are doing everything possible and impossible for the victory and preservation of freedom, any internal betrayal, any 'beach' [holiday] or any personal enrichment instead of Ukraine's interests triggers fury at the very least," he said.

Mr Aristov has handed in a letter of resignation which will be discussed in the next parliamentary session, parliament speaker Ruslan Stefanchuk said on Facebook.

Several senior Ukrainian officials resigned earlier this year after Mr Zelensky began a shake-up of personnel across his government. Their departures came as the Ukraine launched a broad anti-corruption drive.

Hunter Biden: Plea deal for president's son collapses in dramatic court hearing

An agreement expected to see US President Joe Biden's son, Hunter, plead guilty to tax charges and admit a gun offence has dramatically fallen apart in court.

The plea deal, negotiated over several weeks, was likely to spare the younger Mr Biden prison time.

But a judge on Wednesday said she could not "rubber stamp the agreement".

The case marks the first time the justice department has charged the child of a sitting president.

Hunter Biden's lawyers have been given 14 days to hash out a new deal with the prosecution.

It follows a five-year investigation into the finances of the US first son, who arrived on Wednesday morning at the court in Wilmington, Delaware.

In a plea agreement announced last month, he was to be charged with two misdemeanour counts for failing to pay his taxes on time in 2017 and 2018.

He was also to admit that he had illegally possessed a gun while being a drug user, and agree to drug treatment and monitoring in lieu of a more serious felony charge and possible jail time.

But during the three-hour hearing, US District Court Judge Maryellen Noreika questioned whether the deal would also provide Hunter



Biden with immunity from crimes he could be found liable for in the future.

She said the agreement contained "non-standard terms" and its proposed resolution for the gun possession offence was "unusual".

Officials with the justice department are still investigating whether Hunter Biden violated federal laws that required him to register as a foreign agent while working in China and Ukraine during his father's vice-presidency, CNN reported.

Legal teams for both sides were seen negotiating in full view of reporters inside the court in an effort to salvage the plea deal or carve out a narrower agreement.

But the hearing ended with Judge Noreika, a Trump appointee,

declining to sign the deal. She gave the two parties a fortnight to reach a new agreement and brief her.

Hunter Biden, who initially offered to enter a guilty plea, ended by pleading not guilty for the time being.

In a statement on Wednesday, the White House said the president and first lady "love their son and they support him as he continues to rebuild his life".

"Hunter Biden is a private citizen and this was a personal matter for him," said press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre.

Republicans zone in on Hunter allegations

Congressional Republicans allege Hunter Biden was offered a "sweetheart deal"

Sinéad O'Connor: Irish singer dies aged 56

Irish singer and activist Sinéad O'Connor has died at the age of 56.

Her family announced the news "with great sadness", saying "her family and friends are devastated". The cause of death has not been made public.

She was best known for her single Nothing Compares 2 U, released in 1990, which reached number one and brought her worldwide fame.

Taoiseach (Irish PM) Leo Varadkar said her music "was loved around the world and her talent was unmatched".

Irish President Michael D Higgins praised O'Connor's "authenticity" as well as her "beautiful, unique voice".

"What Ireland has lost at such a relatively young age is one of our greatest and most gifted composers, songwriters and performers of recent decades, one who had a unique talent and extraordinary connection with her audience, all of whom held such love and warmth for her," he said.

Media caption,

Sinéad O'Connor: 'Friends tell me I'm not a terrible person...I'm just not boring'

Born Sinead Marie Bernadette O'Connor in Glenageary, County Dublin, in December 1966, the singer had a difficult childhood.

As a teenager, she was placed in Dublin's An Grianan Training Centre, once one of the notorious Magdalene laundries, originally set up to incarcerate young girls deemed to be promiscuous.

One nun bought her a guitar and set her up with a music teacher - which led to the launch of O'Connor's musical career.

She released her first critically acclaimed album The Lion And The Cobra in 1987, which entered the top 40 in the UK and US.

Her follow-up was I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got, which included Nothing Compares 2 U.

Written by Prince, the song reached number one around the world, including in the US and the UK.

Irish singer Sinéad O'Connor has died at the age of 56

O'Connor, who was outspoken in her social and political views, released 10 studio albums between 1987 and 2014.

In 1991, she was named artist of the year by Rolling Stone magazine and took home the Brit Award for international female solo artist.

The following year, one of the most notable events of her career took place when she ripped up a picture of Pope John Paul II on US TV show Saturday Night Live, where she was the invited performer.

Stocks market loses N186.85bn over selloffs in MTNN, others

TEMITOPE ADEBAYO

The equities market on Wednesday ended its four-day winning streak, due to selloffs in telco heavyweight, MTN Nigeria alongside FBN Holdings and WAPCO, as market capitalization lost N186.85billion to close at N35.75trillion.

At the close yesterday's trading activities, the domestic bourse closed in red, while the benchmark index shed 0.46 per cent to close at 65,687.16 points.

Specifically, selloffs in telco heavyweight, MTNN (-

3.44%), FBNH (-4.87%) and WAPCO (-0.36%) underpinned the market's weak performance, despite gains in ZENITHBANK (+0.86%), SEPLAT (+10.00%) and STANBIC (+2.96%).

Consequently, the year-to-date (YTD) return fell to 28.17 per cent, while analysis of market activities showed trade turnover settled lower relative to the previous session, with the value of transactions down by 3.77 per cent.

A total of 500.43m shares valued at ₦7.14bn were exchanged in 7,345 deals. UBA (-0.67%) led the

volume chart with 58.31 units traded while ACCESSCORP (-4.72%) led the value chart in deals worth ₦991.20m.

Market breadth closed positive at a 1.53-to-1 ratio with advancing issues outnumbering declining ones. SEPLAT (+10.00%)

topped twenty-five (25) others on the leader's log while UNILEVER (-10.00%) led sixteen (16) others on the laggard's table.



NCAA warns airlines overwriting CVRs after serious accidents

CHUKWUEMEKE IWELUNMO

The Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) has issued an All Operators Letter (AOL), warning domestic airlines against overwriting the Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) of aircraft after serious incidents and accidents.

The civil aviation authority in the (AOL) with reference number: NCAA/DGCA/AOL/11/16/365, signed by Capt. Musa Nuhu, the Director-General Civil Aviation (DGCA), stressed that airlines' indulge in the unprofessional act in order to circumvent investigation by the Nigeria Safety Investigation Bureau (NSIB).

The letter dated July 24, 2023, addressed to Accountable Executive, Directors of Operations, Chief Pilots and Safety Managers and obtained by our reporters, emphasised that some airlines have consistently indulged in this unwholesome practice, which could impact safety negatively.

The CAA further issued them a 30 days ultimatum to comply with the amendments or face sanction.

The letter to all Accountable Executive/Director of Operations/Chief Pilot/Safety Manager titled: 'Re: Continuous Overwriting of Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) Information Aviation read'.

The Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) had noticed that some airline operators' flight crew members were in the practice of continuously overwriting the CVR information after an occurrence.

"This practice makes it practically impossible for the

Nigerian Safety Investigation Bureau (NSIB) to retrieve actual data to aid in its investigation as required by Paragraphs 25 and 26 of the Civil Aviation (Investigation of Air Accidents and Incidents) Regulations 2019. This action has also impeded and posed undesirable difficulty in ensuring that NSIB successfully discharge its statutory mandate of investigating accidents and serious incidents.

"Unfortunately, this unwholesome practice has recently been detected in the industry. The Authority, by this AOL, wishes to reiterate that Nig. CARS Part 7.8.1.3 (b), which is derived from the provisions of ICAO Annex 6, Section 11.6 states that, "To preserve flight recorder records, flight recorders shall be deactivated upon completion of flight time following an accident or incident. The flight recorders shall not be reactivated before their disposition as determined in accordance with the accident incident regulations of Nigeria.

"Furthermore, Nig. CARS Part 8.14.10.3 (a) requires that "The operator/owner of the aircraft, or in the case where it is leased, the lessee, shall ensure, to the extent possible, in the event the aircraft becomes involved in an accident or incident, the preservation of all related flight recorder records and, if necessary, the associated flight recorders, and their retention in safe custody pending their disposition as determined by the Accident Investigation Bureau (now NSIB)."

It would be recalled that NCAA issued an FSG All Operators Letter (AOL) with ref:NCAA/FSG/AOL/19/003

and dated 30th July, 2019 with the purpose of alerting all aircraft operators on the continuous overwriting of

Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) Information by their flight crew members and the necessity to ensure compli-

ance with the appropriate Nigeria Civil Aviation Regulations (Nig. CARS) requirements.

Google, Verve ease digital transactions for Nigerians on Play Store

MOTOLANI OSENI

As part of efforts to strengthen the digital ecosystem in the country, Google has partnered with Verve, the largest domestic card scheme in Africa, to make digital transactions on Google Play Store easier and more accessible for Nigerians.

With this development, Nigerians can use their Verve cards to make purchases on the Google Play Store, strengthening the digital ecosystem in Nigeria.

Under this new arrangement, Google will process Verve transactions within Nigeria. These transactions will be undertaken in Nigerian Naira (NG), and treated as local transactions by the country's banking institutions. As a result, any Nigerian with an Android device and a Verve card now has a streamlined method for

making purchases on the Google Play Store.

Anthea Crawford, Head of Retail and Payment Partnerships, Google Play, said, "We are thrilled to collaborate with Verve, expanding Google Play access for more Nigerians. The introduction of local payments with Verve cards is a significant milestone, enabling more Nigerians to participate in the app economy and access the apps they need."

Speaking about this partnership, Vincent Ogbunode, Managing Director Verve International, stated that "the integration with Google Play is a significant stride towards achieving Verve's vision of promoting financial inclusion. We are excited to bring digital content and services closer to Verve cardholders, hence bridging the digital divide."

As a foremost payment card scheme in Nigeria, Verve's expanding acceptance promotes inclusion by extending

the reach of digital services to a larger segment of the Nigerian population. Maximizing this exciting possibility, users can now add their Verve Cards to their Google Play Account and pay in Naira, without stress.

Here's how to use your Verve card on Google Play: Open the Playstore, choose the app you want to buy, click "Buy," and enter your Verve card details when asked. You can also go to pay.google.com, log in with your Gmail account, click on 'Payment Methods,' 'Add Payment Method,' enter your Verve card details and save.

Then, return to the Playstore to make your purchase. Your card will be charged automatically.

This new partnership not only simplifies the payment process for Google Play Store apps and services but also contributes significantly to a more inclusive digital environment for Nigerians.



CBN lifts post no debit ban on 440 accounts

* Instructs banks to notify affected customers

TEMITOPE ADEBAYO

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has instructed banks to remove the Post No Debit (PND) restriction placed on the bank accounts of 440 individuals and companies in the country.

A post-no-debit is a restriction placed on an account to stop the account holders from carrying out debit transactions, including ATMs and cheques, but the accounts can receive inflows.

The accounts whose PND restriction were lifted included that of betting, energy, technology, and fintech firms.

A letter dated July 25,

2023, signed by A.M. Barau on behalf of the CBN director of banking supervision, and issued to all banks in the country, directed that all PNDs on the 440 accounts be vacated.

PND is a restriction on an account which stops an account holder from carrying out debit card transactions, money transfer out of the



account, and check transactions. When an account is placed on Post No Debit, it means the customer cannot conduct any banking transactions in the country of jurisdiction.

On the list of the 440 account holders that the CBN directed that banks vacate the PND include; Bamboo Systems Technology Limited, Escal Oil & Gas Limited, Rise Vest Technologies Limited, Chaka Technologies Limited, abokiFX Limited, Nairabet International, Northwood Energy Services and Proport Marine Limited, among others.

In 2021, CBN instructed

banks to freeze the accounts of 18 companies, ranging from bureaux de change, construction firms, investment companies, laundering services, and property companies.

The affected companies included; Bakori Mega Services, Ashambrakh General Enterprise, Namuduka Ventures Limited, Crosslinks Capital and Investment Limited, IGP Global Synergy Limited, Davedan Mille Investment Limited and Urban Laundry.

Others were Advanced Multi-Links Services Limited, Spray Resources, Al-Ishaq Global Resources Limited, Himark Intertrades, Charblecom Concept Limited, and Wudatage Global Resources.

Treynor Soft Ventures, Fyrstryam Global Concepts Limited, Samarize Global Nigeria Limited, and Zahraddeen Haruna Shahru were also included. All 18 companies have had their bank accounts unfrozen by the apex bank.

Ali-Balogun moves to lead NIPR

GODWIN ANYEBE

The August 24 date for the 2023 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) may be about a month away but the build-up to the elections has no doubt begin to gather momentum as a prominent member of the Governing Council, Mrs Nkechi Ali-Balogun, has expressed interest in running for election into the Council of the foremost public relations institute in Africa.

Ali-Balogun, a former, and the first female Chairperson of the Lagos Chapter of the NIPR, made this known during the AGM with a campaign themed, 'PR Future Forward'.

She would be bringing her wealth of professional and managerial experience inclu-

ding serving as Chairman of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations, Lagos State Chapter, a 2 terms membership of the Council in the highest body of the profession as well as a multi-disciplinary professional experience in client services and public relations consultancy of over 25 years of as one of her competitive edge to her quest to lead the Institute.

With a 10-point major campaign focus which she has summarized under the acronym CRANE geared at creativity, responsiveness, aspirational NIPR, injecting freshness and encompassing, she intends to focus on a digitalized Institute where NIPR will leverage technology in the delivery of her offerings and services.

For instance, running an online curriculum for the Mandatory Continuing Profes-

sional Development Programmes [MCPD] as well as online certification of aspiring practitioners the essence of which is the convenience and cost optimization for all stakeholders of the Institute among others.

According to Ali-Balogun, "I am running for this office because I want to continue to dedicate my time, energy, and experience to championing the interests of our Institute. As President my vision for the Institute will be centred on working together to shape the future of public relations and establish our organisation as a trailblazer," she said.

Investigations says eminent industry practitioners are rooting for her because it is believed that she has basic relevant leadership and human management requirements of what it takes to galvanise a contemporary public relations practice for the institute.

NGX Group declares interim dividend payment of 25k for H1 2023

MOTOLANI OSENI

Following the emergency meeting of the Board of Directors on Tuesday, 25 July 2023, Nigerian Exchange Group Plc (NGX Group) Wednesday announced an interim dividend of 25 kobo per ordinary share of 50 kobo each, distributable to shareholders for the first half of financial year 2023.

This dividend, which is the first since the demutualisation of the Nigerian Stock Exchange will be paid to shareholders whose names appear in the Shareholders' Register as of close of business Monday, 31 July 2023.

Payment will be remitted electronically to qualified shareholders on Thursday, 31 August 2023.

The dividend announcement comes as a resolution of the Board following the request from shareholders at the recently held Annual General Meeting on 14 July 2023.

Commenting on the dividend announcement, the Chairman, NGX Group, Alhaji (Dr) Umaru Kwairanga said, "The announcement of the dividend will send a signal to our shareholders that the Company has a listening and responsive Board following the request at the last annual general meeting.

"We hope to continue

enjoying the support of our valued shareholders as NGX Group seeks to execute on its strategy to create sustainable growth in the medium to long term", he said.

The Group Chief Executive Officer, NGX Group, Mr Oscar Onyema, stated, "The proposed payment will not significantly impact the cash position and retained earnings of the Company and will further position the company as investible for a wider class of investors in the capital market.

"We will continue to focus on maximising value for shareholders just as we champion the development of Africa's financial markets."

Lagos startups raise \$820m in early-stage funding

Startups in Lagos raised around \$820 million in early-stage funding which was the highest in the Sub-Saharan startup ecosystem, a report has revealed.

The report by policy and advisory research firm, Startup Genome, also revealed that, the Lagos startup ecosystem calculated using the value of exits and startup valuation from the second quarter of 2020 to 2022 was valued at \$8.4 billion, thereby, placing the state as regional leader in the Sub-Saharan startup ecosystem in terms of the value of the ecosystem and the amount raised in funding.

The report disclosed that Lagos was closely followed by Nairobi and Cape Town with total startups valuation of \$7 billion and \$3 billion respectively. The report also revealed that Lagos held its place in the range of 51 and 60 in the global emerging startup ecosystem ranking.

In terms of the amount raised in funding, the report stated, OPay's \$400 million Series C in August 2021 was the region's biggest deal, while Flutterwave's \$250 million Series D in February 2022 saw its valuation increase to over \$3 billion.

Findings from the report also show that Venture Capital (VC) funding in the region declined by six per cent from 2021 to 2022. Fintech was the region's top-performing technology sector comprising 41 per cent of total startup deals between 2018 and 2022. Nairobi was reported to be the region's biggest fintech hub.

The report, therefore, noted that 88 per cent of tech startups in Nigeria are in Lagos amounting to over 400 startups, adding that the Lagos tech ecosystem is dominated by fintechs which constitute 49 per cent of tech companies in the city.



Fuel Subsidy: It's too early to criticize Tinubu - APC stalwart

TOM OKPE,
Abuja

Former acting National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress, (APC) Hiliard Eta has stated that Nigerians should take it easy with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu as it's just few days to his reign as President of the Federal Republic, judging from the challenges brought about by the removal of fuel subsidy.

He advised that Nigerians should allow President Tinubu come out with a clean measures to alleviate their pains.

While calling for restrains, the Governing Council Chairman of the APC Institute of Progressives Affairs exonerated Mr President from blame saying its early to criticize the new regime.

ETA made the appeal in Abuja on Tuesday at the party National Secretariat, Buhari House, to discuss the 10th anniversary of the part with the its national leaders.

Speaking with journalists, Eta said: Let me start by saying that there is a consensus in Nigeria that the time had come for the subsidy to be removed.

"I believe no section of the country is against subsidy removal. The question is, what happens after the removal of the subsidy? This government is barely 54 days and even though I will not run away from issues of serious economic dimensions across most homes in Nigeria, I think it is too early to pass a judgement on this government.

"It has removed subsidies but the forces of fiscal and monetary policies will bring everything to normal. I don't believe the price of fuel will rise above what it is but even if it happens, I believe that the time has come for the president and his team to bring solutions to the many economic problems that are tied or

nexus between all of these things to our wellbeing.

"Take, for instance, the scarcity of Dollars, our economy is tied to importation. If not, we won't be going about looking for Dollars."

He further stressed: "The reason for our visit to the party today is to intimate and interact with the leadership of the party, especially with the coming of the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the party.

"As you are all aware, the APC was established on the 31st of July 2013. Exactly one week from today, we will be celebrating it in the political evolution process of the country.

"The party was established in 2013 and by 2015 we have done the unthinkable, we had opposition parties, come together and ousted a behemoth of a political party that has bestride the political landscape for sixteen years.

"We have gone ahead to win back-to-back national elections in 2019 and 2023.

"After the resignation of the national chairman and secretary, Senators Abdullahi Adamu and Iyiola Omisore, respectively, the party seems to be in crisis, but I will assure you that, the institute has no official position on this.

"The last time the faculty met we did not discuss anything about the party but in my capacity as a member of the party, I will say, there is no crisis in the party.

"You know that a political party is peopled by Nigerians with different worldviews, ideologies, cosmologists and understandings. You cannot expect millions of people to come together and not have altercations and acrimony. Even in nuclear homes where you have the mother and children from the same father, they have acrimony. Let us not elevate these things beyond the ordinary," he said.



Photo caption: President of the Senate, Godswill Akpabio (middle), flanked by his Deputy, Jibrin Barau (left) and former governor of Rivers State, Nyesom Wike (right) displaying books launched Tuesday by the Senate Leader, Opeyemi Bamidele, at the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Centre, Abuja.

On his opinion over the endorsement by the Progressives governors of former Kano State

Governor, Umar Ganduje as replacement for Adamu, ETA said; "The president has not

said he chose him, and the governors have not said so, I can't react to an issue we don't know

who chose him if he tells us who chose him, then we can start responding," he add.

Akpabio laments cold war between Gobs, predecessors

...Tinubu to send Ministerial list to Senate latest today - Senate Leader

TUNDE OPALANA,
Abuja

The President of the Senate Godswill Akpabio on Wednesday lamented that the ugly trend of infight between Nigerian governors and their predecessors in office.

He said it is surprising to note that governors in Nigeria always fight their predecessor immediately they resumed office.

The Senate President who spoke at the 60th birthday anniversary lecture and book presentation of Senate leader, Micheal Opeyemi Bamidele in Abuja applauded the celebrant for his loyalty to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for over 30 years when he served as aide to him in National Assembly in 1992.

Akpabio who expressed displeasure with the attitude of governors to their predecessors said there is no former governor that has not have issue with his governor citing issue of Senator Adams Oshiomole, Senator Adamu Ailero apart from that of Ekiti state, Abiodun

Oyebamiji who is yet to fight with his predecessor.

The President of the Senate said, "The Governor of Ekiti State is great example of what leadership should be, he has remained steadfast

"As a Governor, the moment you handover power to your successor, he will turn on you, either his taste will change or attitude, there is no any governor in Nigeria that has no problem with their predecessor apart from Ekiti governor there is why we have to celebrate Senator Micheal Opeyemi Bamidele for the kind of his person."

Meanwhile, the Senate leader has disclosed that the much expected Ministerial list will be received by the Senate in the next 48 hours.

Bamidele said that President Tinubu told him this morning when he called to greet me for my birthday lecturer this morning around 10:03 am that he will not be able to come to the birthday lecture because of the communication he needed to submit to Senate in the next 49 hours.

Speaking at the

event, former Vice Chancellor of University of Lagos, Prof. Toyin Ogundipe disclosed that Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), Vehicle Inspection Officers (VIO) have no business in the convoy of President Bola Tinubu and Vice President Kashim Shettima once the Police is in the convoy.

The former Vice Chancellor who delivered lecture at the 60th birthday anniversary lecture said that there is for political office holders to reduce number of vehicles in their convoy to show to Nigerians that you feel their pains in this season.

Ogundipe said,

"There is need for our leaders to reduce there number of vehicles in their convey so that Nigerians will known that you feel their pains.

"There is nothing VIO, Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) are doing in the entourage of President and Vice President once you have police I'm the convoy."

Speaking on the issue of Insecurity in Nigeria, Prof. Ogundipe said that the issue of insecurity is global problem saying there are more crimes in the countries condemning Nigeria, but it is possible to change the narrative because they control cyberspace.



Senate confirms Board of North East Development Commission

HARUNA SALAMI,
Abuja

The Senate on Wednesday confirmed President Bola Tinubu's nominees for persons for appointment as members of the board of the North East Development Commission (NEDC). Those confirmed are Gen. Paul Tarfa (Rtd) Chairman, Hon Gambo Maikomo (Taraba) member, Abdullahi Abbas (Kano) member, Tsav Stephen

Aondoana (Benue) member, Chief Mutiu Lawal-Are (Lagos) member and Hon. Samuel Ifeanyi Onuigbo (Abia) member. Others are Frank Achinike Owzor (Rivers) member, Mohammed Goni Alkali (Borno), reappointed as Managing Director, Musa Yashi (Bauchi) reappointed as Executive Director, Humanitarian Affairs, Ahmed Abdulsalam Yahaya (Gombe) Executive Director OPS and Dr. Abubakar Garba Iliya (Yobe) Executive Director (Admin & Finance).

The confirmation was due to presentation of an executive communication presented to the Committee of the Whole by Opeyemi Bamidele, Senate Leader that the Senate should consider the request of President Tinubu on the confirmation of the nomination of the board of NEDC. This he said, was in accordance with the provisions of Section 5 (b) of the North East Development Commission Establishment Act 2017.



Kaduna: Tribunal admits 316 BVAS machines as exhibits from PDP's Ashiru

IDIBIA GABRIEL,
Kaduna

At least a total of 316 Bimodal Voters' Accreditation System (BVAS) machines presented before Justice Victor Oviawe led panel have subsequently been admitted as exhibits at the governorship tribunal sitting in Kaduna, at the resumed hearing on Tuesday. The BVAS machines were admitted as exhibits based on the subpoena served on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), to bring them before the court, the said items as applied by the 1st and 2nd petitioners, Hon. Isa Ashiru and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), through their counsel, Samuel Atung (SAN). INEC representative, Yusuf Zubairu who was at the court on behalf of the Commission made a written statement on oath before the registrar of the tribunal to present BVAS machines of 19 Local Government areas of the state

In his deposition before the court; the Commission was subpoenaed "on Duces Tecum (to tender) and Duces Tecum Ad Testificandum (to tender and testify) and demonstrate how the machines were used to collate election results in the state at the last gubernatorial polls. However, Zubairu who is a staff of INEC at the ICT/ Voters' Research Department testified that the results on the Irev was the true reflection of the votes cast during the 18th March, 2023 gubernatorial election in the state. Meanwhile, one of the prayers of Ashiru and his party before the tribunal was that they won the election going by the Irev results, as alleged. Zubairu, who is a witness also added that the BVAS machines could not be tampered with, either before, during or after the election, just as he explained to the court that each machine has its unique identity numbers. The witness, while demonstrating, by using one of the machines, told the tribunal that polling unit 050 of Makera ward in Kaduna South LGA had

715 total voters register, but 107 voters were accredited. Earlier In his defence before the tribunal granted the application of the 1st and 2nd petitioners' counsel for the witness to demonstrate by using the BVAS machines, Chief Duro Adeyele (SAN) who is the counsel to the Kaduna state Governor, Dr. Uba Sani, objected to the admissibility of the BVAS machines through the witness. The counsel also argued that the witness' deposition did not state that the witness (Yusuf Zubairu) would open and demonstrate the BVAS machine before the tribunal. "Demonstration of BVAS' machine is not in the witness' statement," the counsel emphasized. In his counter, the Ashiru and PDP's counsel said that the Commission was subpoenaed to (Duces Tecum Ad Testificandum) tender and demonstrate the machine before the court. The court adjourned the case to 26th July, 2023 for the continuation of the hearing of petition.

TOM GARBA,
Yola

Governor Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri of Adamawa State has reaffirmed the staunch commitment of his administration to implement its promises to the people, saying leadership is trust. He stated this on Tuesday when he received in audience the sons and daughters of Bata Chiefdom from the Demsa local government area on a courtesy call in the Government House, Yola.

Governor Fintiri said his administration was aware of its promises and would indeed keep to them, as according to him the needs of the people remain the priority of the government. "Let's keep this relationship. Maintain your relationship with PDP. If you go out in this country, the wonders of what the PDP governors are doing are unimaginable and Adamawa is not an exception," Fintiri said. He stressed that the government will create an enabling environment

I will fulfil campaign promises, Fintiri assures Adamawa people

for people to have a sense of belonging, assuring that it will fight poverty, saying it was the only stumbling block that prevents the development of the state. The Spokesman of the delegation, Chief Dauda Teneke appreciated the Fintiri administration for its impact on the people and expressed the conviction that the governor will continue to excel in the task of governance. Contributing, Mr. Peter Bokido congratulated Governor Fintiri for his hard-earned victory at the polls and saluted him for the light and hospital projects among others in the area, and prayed to God to guide him.



Diphtheria: Senate directs Health Ministry, Centre to prevent spread ...wants FG to carry out nationwide vaccination

TUNDE OPALANA,
Abuja

The Senate on Wednesday raised the alarm on why the communicable disease known as diphtheria should be curtailed.

The upper chamber has therefore directed the Federal Ministry of Health, National Centre for Disease Control and National Primary Health Care Development Agency to halt further spread of the disease.

The lawmakers as well called on the Federal Government to increase funding for all institutions

involved in the production and distribution of vaccines so as to effectively tackle the prevalence of communicable diseases in Nigeria.

The red chamber also directed relevant agencies to carryout a nationwide vaccination to curb the spread of Diphtheria in the country.

The Senate's resolution followed the consideration and adoption of a motion sponsored by Senator Sunday Katung representing Kaduna South Senatorial district.

Senator Katung noted that the spread of Diphtheria in Kaduna has resulted to several deaths in the state and its environs.

He noted that the airborne disease which can also be transmitted via fluid exchange has become a major health challenge that requires urgent government attention.

He said Kaduna State government has confirmed that the death toll from the diphtheria outbreak in the State has risen to 17 with 68 suspected cases identified across the state as at Sunday the 23rd of July 2023;

Katung noted that a breakdown shows 10 people have reportedly died from the disease in Kafanchan, Jema'a Local Government Area of



Kaduna State, while 3 children died in Makarfi Local Government Area, while seven others were hospitalized;

He also disclosed that diphtheria is a highly contagious, infectious disease caused by a bacterium called *Corynebacterium diphtheria* rendering infected people struck with serious breathing and swallowing problems that may develop sores on the skin.

"The highly contagious nature of the disease means that without immediate and concerted efforts towards

curbing it, the disease would spread at a devastating rate especially considering the communal and poor living conditions in most rural communities in Nigeria", Senator Katung stressed.

In his contribution to the motion, Senator Darlington Nwokocha representing Abia Central Senatorial district lamented the state of government control hospitals in the country especially the National Hospital in Abuja.

He said Nigeria should stop fire brigade approach to issue of health in the country while urging the Senate to suspend plenary one day and pay visit to the national hospital to assess the level of decay and poor medical facilities.

After the debate on the motion, Senate unanimously urged all relevant health agencies in the country to liase with health ministries in Kaduna and other neighboring states to intensify contact-tracing with a view to curbing Diphtheria spread.

Bayelsa Deputy Gov welcomes over 200 APC defectors to PDP

AMOS OKIOMA,
Yenagoo

The Bayelsa State chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), on Tuesday, got a fresh boost as over 200 party faithful from the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) from three political wards in Ekeremor Council Area defected to the ruling party in the state.

The affected political wards are Wards 2 and 3 in Constituency 1, and Ward 6 in Constituency 2.

Receiving the defectors on behalf Governor Douye Diri in Government House, Yenagoo, the Deputy Governor, Senator Lawrence Ewhrudjakpo, said it was good and timely for them to retrace their steps back to the PDP political family in the state at a time the party was preparing for the 2023 governorship election.

Senator Diri remarked that elections in the past had been particularly tough for the PDP in Amabulu community in Ward 6, and expressed the hope that with their return to the PDP, victory was assured for the party in the area.

The governor commended the defectors for returning to the PDP, pointing out that the opposition APC in the state had no good plans for them, other than to use them perpetrate electoral violence and thereafter dump them in their usual style.

He assured the returnees that, apart from those recently appointed into the big eight councils and the 32

Rural Development Areas (RDAs), his administration would roll out more appointments that would cut across its grassroots support base.

Governor Diri, who equally promised to carry out more projects in communities despite the closeness of the election, however, called on the defectors and Bayelsans to vote massively for the PDP in the forthcoming governorship election to sustain good governance.

Speaking earlier, the Coordinator of the defectors, Chief Fedude Zimughan remarked that the PDP members who went to the APC in protest had returned to their party.

Chief Fedude Zimughan, who is staunch chieftain of the PDP in Ekeremor LGA, pointed out that they were returning under the aegis of "Unit to Unit Delivery for Senator Douye Diri and Senator Lawrence Ewhrudjakpo", prepared to deliver in the November 11 gubernatorial election.



In their separate remarks, the leaders of the defectors from the three political wards, Mr. Amasingha Sunday, Mr. Peres Money Oyadongha, Mr. Abeke Aditola, and Barrister Otoni Solomon assured the Deputy Governor that they had returned to the PDP for serious business ahead of the governorship election.

They noted that they had no other choice than to cross over to PDP as they were not given any recognition by the leadership of the APC, stressing that their departure would end the opposition's recruitment exercise in the area,

Top government functionaries present at the ceremony include the State PDP Chairman, Chief Solomon Aguanana; the the Secretary to State Government, Alabo Gideon Ekeuwei; Special Adviser to the Governor on Political Matters, Chief Collins Cocodia; and Senior Special Assistant on Security and political leader from Ward 3, Mr. Ondo Gbekumo.

Assembly member, Longyi wants Plateau radio, television rejig

KINGSLEY CHUKWUKA,
Jos

A member of the Plateau State House of Assembly, Hon. Nannim Joseph Longyi has moved a motion on the floor of the Assembly for some booster stations of the radio and television station in the state communities be rejigged.

The State owned media known as PRTVC has been left unattended to by previous governments.

Needing an upgrade by the present administration, Longyi called on the Assembly members to set up an adhoc committee to rejig three booster stations in Plateau communities

The booster stations are Dankang community, Magun community and Shendam Local Government Area of the State.

According to him: "There is no doubt that one of the numerous responsibilities of the Government is to provide effective and modern means of disseminating information to its citizens.

"It is in fulfillment of this responsibility to disseminate genuine and correct information to the citizens that Plateau government established three booster stations for Plateau Radio and Television corporation PRTVC to reach out to the people in Southern Plateau", he said.

He regretted that despite the existence of these booster stations citizens in Langtang North/Langtang South, Shendam, Mikang, Quan-Pan, Kanke, Kanam, Mangu and Wase LGA can not boast of receiving any electronic media signal where information regarding government activities as it's concern them is being relayed to them.

The lawmaker also argued that the three booster stations ceased to function a long time ago adding that it is worrisome to watch such crucial means of disseminating information not serving the purpose for which it was originally established by the state government.

He also lamented that citizens of the above listed constituency and other parts of the state have been deprived of getting correct and genuine information from these booster stations stressing that this development has made them to rely on hearsay and unverified information they can get from unreliable sources.

"It is against this background that I call on the leadership of the house to as a matter of urgency and necessity constitute an adhoc committee to look into the possibility of revamping PRTVC booster stations in Dankang, Shendam and Mangu LGA with the view to provide radio and television signals to the people at the

Media critical to successful electoral process - INEC Chairman

TUNDE OPALANA,
Abuja

The Nigerian media has been described as critical to success of electoral processes in the country.

Chairman, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Mahmood Yakubu passed this note if confidence on the media Wednesday at the meeting with media executives and heads of various media organisations at the Commission's headquarters, Abuja.

He also acknowledged the long-standing partnership between the Commission and the media which he called critical stakeholders.

"Beyond voter and civic education, we regularly consult you ahead of the formulation of policies or the implementation of activities. Media organisations are also accredited to cover elections and electoral activities. Beyond reporting on our activities, we are also convinced that as citizens you should be part of the discussion for the overall improvement of our electoral process based on your field observations," he said.

While accepting that there were challenges despite the many positive aspects of the 2023 General Election, the chairman said the Commission expected at the meeting media practitioners from their practical experience of reporting or analysing the election, would outline their observation and make useful suggestions on the processes and procedure for future elections.

"The Commission would like to share with you our plans for pending bye-elections and preparations for the off-cycle Governorship elections in Bayelsa, Imo and Kogi States scheduled to hold on Saturday 11th November 2023," he said.

Speaking, the President of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, Comrade Chris Isiguzo said the 2023 General Elections were a defining moment in Nigeria, where the collective voice of the people resonated through the ballot box.

He said as the fourth estate of the realm, the media, played a crucial role in upholding the pillars of democracy - transparency, accountability, and the right to information.

He urged INEC to streamline the process of accrediting media organisations and personnel

to ensure that qualified journalists have unhindered access to cover election events, fostering trust and credibility in their reporting.

Stressing that an enlightened and educated electorate is the backbone of any thriving democracy, the NUJ President said effectiveness of voters education should be assessed.

"An enlightened and educated electorate is the backbone of any thriving democracy. Our commitment to public enlightenment and voter education remains unwavering. During the 2023 elections, we undertook the noble responsibility of educating citizens on their rights, the electoral process, and the candidates vying for various offices.

"Let us take this opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of our voter education initiatives and strategize on innovative approaches to reach a broader audience. By empowering citizens with knowledge, we strengthen the foundation of our democracy," he said.

Isiguzo lamented the Nigerian media faces the challenge of fake news from uncensored social media as well as hate speech.

He said "while the media plays a crucial role in fostering democracy, we also face challenges that demand our unwavering attention. The rise of hate speech and fake news poses a threat to the fabric of our society.

"As we review the 2023 elections, let us candidly address the issue of hate speech and misinformation, seeking ways to combat them without infringing on the principles of free speech. Additionally, we must discuss how to ensure equitable access to media platforms for all political actors, promoting inclusivity and fair representation."



Oborevwoi mourns as Obule dies at 65

NOSA ÀKEÑZUA,
Asaba

governorship and senatorial aspirant of the party.

In a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Sir Festus Ahon, on Wednesday in Asaba, Oborevwoi commiserated with the people of Sapele, Okpe Kingdom and Urhobo nation over the demise of the grassroots politician and community leader.

Obule, who held the traditional title of "Erhi of Okpe Kingdom", reportedly died on Tuesday after a protracted illness at the age of 65.

Until his death, the late Obule was a chieftain and leader of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the state and was a former

According to the Governor, the deceased was an astute politician, successful businessman and affable philanthropist, who was very popular among his people.

Oborevwoi said; "on behalf of the Government and people of Delta, I mourn the

passing of a gentleman and grassroots politician, Chief Charles Ufuoma Obule, who died on Tuesday evening.

"The news of his passing was a terrible shock to me. He was a gentleman-politician, and he distinguished himself in the service of his people as a great philanthropist.

"Chief Obule was a versatile lawyer, prominent businessman and astute politician who excelled in all that he did. He was a humanist par excellence. Obule Group of Schools and Medical Centre, which he founded, are renowned for quality education and healthcare delivery to the people of Sapele and the Urhobo nation at a hugely subsidised cost.

"As a grassroots politician and party financier, Chief Obule contributed greatly to the growth of the PDP in Sapele Local Government Area and Delta State. His death is a big loss not just to the PDP and Urhobo nation, but also to the entire Delta State.

"I pray for God's comfort and strength for the bereaved family and all those whose lives he touched. And may his soul rest in peace."



Stop heating the polity, Adamawa Gov warns politicians

....says it is time to work not politicking



TOM GARBA,
Yola

Governor Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri of Adamawa State Wednesday warned the citizens especially politicians against inciting comments, saying the time of politicking is over.

He stated this when he received in audience stakeholders of Yola South on a thank-you visit over appointment of their son, Barrister Auwal Tukur as Secretary to the State Government (SSG).

Exchanging pleasantries with the visitors, the Governor expressed worry over how some people do post prejudiced comments particularly on the social media, vowing to deal with such recalcitrants with treason.

He however urged the stakeholders to enlighten the people on the dangers of cutting down trees for firewood, saying such is detrimental to the preservation of environment.

The governor resta-

ted his pledge to addressing challenges of water supply among others in Yola South, promising more developments to the people and called for peaceful coexistence in the state.

Earlier in his remarks, the Executive Chairman Yola South Local Government Area, Engineer Hamidu Mahmud thanked Governor Fintiri for appointing their sons and daughters into government positions.

He lauded Governor Fintiri for executing massive projects in Yola South, pointing out the ongoing water project, assuring him unalloyed loyalty and support to the present administration.



Women protest against Deputy Gov over community election

IZUNNA OKAFOR,
AWKA

Women of Mbaukwu, Awka South Local Government Area (LGA) of Anambra State have warned the state Deputy Governor, Dr. Onyekachukwu Ibezim to leave them alone and concentrate on his job as number two. The women gave the warning during a protest to register their displeasure and dissatisfaction with what they described as an unwarranted high-handed interference from some government officials in the leadership matters of their community women's union.

During the peaceful protest on Tuesday, the visibly unhappy women stormed the streets, the market square, the Civil Centre, the Igwe's (monarch) Palace and other places, with placards bearing different inscriptions that represent their position on the matter.

Some of the inscriptions read 'No Crisis for Mbaukwu Women', 'No to Imposition', 'Deputy Governor Face Your Work', among others.

Expressing their grievances at the palace of Igwe P. N. Anagwu of Mbaukwu, the women regretted that after they conducted the Town Union leadership election for the women of the community on June 8, 2023, and elected new leadership (with Mrs. Theresa from Akabor village as the president); the then Women President-General of the community, whose tenure had expired, did not hand over to the newly elected leadership long after it was due.

The women said that as they were clamoring for a hand over, the next thing they saw on the social media was the news that another leadership (Caretaker Committee) had been constituted and inaugurated already in Awka, the state's seat of power, for women of the community. The Committee was said to have been inaugurated by the State Commissioner for Women Affairs, Mrs. Ify Obinabo.

The women said the news did not only come to them as a shock, but also saddened them, as they kept wondering when, how and by whom the said new leadership was elected. They said they also wondered why the said inauguration of the so-called new leadership held in Awka, rather than in Mbaukwu, which has been the usual venue for inauguration of the community's leadership since the town's history.

According to them, the Commissioner, in the letter announcing the inauguration of the said Caretaker Committee, imposed her choice of leaders on them, without any consultations.

As was observed by this reporter, the letter from the Commissioner positioned CJ Nebechukwu Stella Obiageli as Chairperson of the Caretaker Committee and Leader of the women, stating also that the Committee would oversee the affairs of the women leadership in the community for one year before election would be held.

The women further explained that the Commissioner, in her reasons for the creation and inauguration of the Caretaker Committee, cited crisis in their Union's leadership and their disobedience after she warned them not to hold the June 8 election until government officials were assigned to supervise it, which they ignored and went on with the election, without any government delegation present to witness the election.

Be that as it may, the Mbaukwu women, who denied any crisis was rocking the women union of the community, also opined that the Deputy Governor of the State, Dr. Ibezim, who also hails from the community, may not be far from the influence behind the Commissioner's action (the inauguration of the Caretaker Committee), alleging that he (the Deputy Governor) had "not been at rest" since his candidate in the June 8 women election absconded and also failed woefully after he had wished her to emerge."

The women also accused the Deputy Governor of probably been determined 'to frustrate the inauguration of the newly elected leadership as it was not his candidate that emerged. This, they further alleged, might have pushed him to leverage his influence to ensure the imposition of another person on the women as Caretaker Committee Chairperson, as done by the Commissioner, rather than seeing the elected executive occupy that position.

The women also wondered why the Commissioner did not make plans for conducting fresh election since she said her reason for not upholding the June 8 election was because the government officials were not on ground to supervise it.

However, when contacted by this reporter, the Commissioner, Mrs. Obinabo attested that the women went against

“
ome of the inscriptions
read 'No Crisis for
Mbaukwu Women', 'No
to Imposition', 'Deputy
Governor Face Your
Work', among others.
”

her directive by conducting the election without any government official present to monitor it; hence her Ministry's decision to constitute a Caretaker Committee for them, to lead them for 12 calendar months before another election is held.

When asked why her Ministry chose not to conduct a fresh election rather than impose an interim leadership on them, as the women complained; the Commissioner simply told this reporter that the women were not supposed to order the Ministry on what to do.

"Are they supposed to order us? Don't we have our own schedule? ...I don't know what they're talking about," she said.

Efforts made by this reporter to get the reaction of the Deputy Governor on the matter proved abortive as he did not pick his calls or reply to message sent to his phone, as of press time.

CPPE laments impact of money supply on FX market

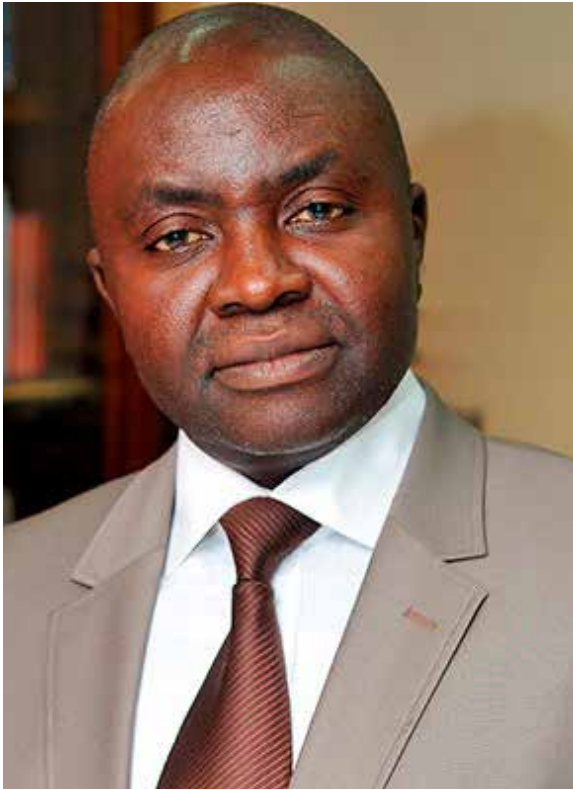
STORIES BY JOY
OBAKEYE

The President of the Centre for the Promotion of Private Enterprise (CPPE), Dr Muda Yusuf, has said that broad money which grew by over N9 trillion, from N55.7 trillion to N64.9trillion is pressuring the naira in the foreign exchange market.

He explained thatthe Money supply grew by an unprecedented 15 per cent in one month between May and June 2023, noting that Broad money grew by over N9 trillion, from N55.7 trillion to N64.9 trillion. "This surge in monetary growth is unprecedented."

According to a statement titled, "The Naira Exchange Rate Conundrum," the CPPE boss cited that the monetary authorities should come up with a sustainable intervention framework to ensure the moderation of current volatility in the forex market. "We recognize the forex supply limitations, but the system needs to be managed in a way that would not undermine investors' confidence."

"The monetary authorities should investigate this drastic growth in money supply and take steps to curb subsequent expansion. Such dramatic growth in money supply poses a significant risk to macroeconomic stability, especially price stability."



He lamented that, over the last few years there had been a cumulative backlog of unmet foreign exchange demand, running into billions of dollars as a result of acute illiquidity in the foreign exchange market.

"With a more liberalized forex market, the pressure of the backlog of unmet demands and other maturing forex related obligations have been unleashed on the investors and exporters window."

"Transiting from a repres-

sive market environment to a more liberalized market could be a source of market instability. However, there is a need for vigilance to prevent questionable capital outflows or speculative assaults on the currency. A free market is not synonymous with a complete absence of regulation. Free enterprise has to be complemented with an appropriate regulatory framework to curb illicit financial flows."

"It is evident that the frequency and scope of Central

Bank of Nigeria, (CBN) intervention in the forex market had decelerated compared to the first five months of the year. Recent reports from the CBN indicate a total of \$17 billion in intervention by the CBN in the forex market in 2022. This is an average of N1.4 billion per month.

"Since the inception of the present administration, it is doubtful whether we had seen an intervention of up to \$1 billion in total. It is expected that as the scale of intervention improves, the volatility will be subdued. And only recently, the government paid \$500m to settle matured debt service obligation on Eurobond. This could also be a constraining supply-side factor.

"The marginal decline in foreign reserves was also disproportionately amplified by the media This also created some anxiety which could also have driven speculative activities in the forex market."

The CPPE believes that the Tinubu administration is on the right path and that the current volatility in the foreign exchange market is a challenge typically inherent in a major policy transition. In a couple of months, we expect the instability to subside.

"On the supply side, the trajectory is that there would be an improvement in oil output which would

The Acting Governor of Ondo State, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, said the "Develop Ondo 2.0 Investment Summit" would attract \$2 billion investments to the state.

Aiyedatiwa, who stated this in Akure while declaring open the three-day investment summit, said it would also create 70,000 new jobs, engage with 100 donor partners and 1,500 investors.

The "Develop Ondo 2.0 Investment Summit" was organised by the state government in partnership with the European Union and the United Nations Development Programme to showcase the investment potential and opportunities in the state.

The acting governor said that the state was blessed with abundant renewable energy sources, such as solar and biomass, making it an ideal location for investments in renewable energy generation and related infrastructure.

Aiyedatiwa noted that the tourism sector held enormous promise, with the state's captivating landscapes, wildlife reserves, historical sites, and cultural heritage which continue to

Ondo opens investment summit, targets \$2b inflow

attract visitors from far and near.

"This summit is the second of its kind, building upon the success of its precursor, "Develop Ondo 1.0."

"It serves as a platform to connect stakeholders from diverse sectors, facilitating constructive dialogue, knowledge sharing, and forging of strategic partnerships that will be the catalyst for accelerated development in our state.

"The 'Develop Ondo 2.0' theme reflects our unwavering commitment to growth and progress, with the number "2.0" symbolising our drive for continuous improvement and innovation.

"The response from potential investors thus far has been highly encouraging, with growing interest in exploring the investment opportunities that Ondo State offers.

AIIG unveiled to drive capital for prosperity, inclusion across Africa

The Africa Impact Investing Group (AIIG) has announced its official launch at the Africa Impact Summit held in Cape Town, South Africa, marking a significant milestone in mobilizing capital for transformative change and sustainable development across the African continent.

AIIG is an active and vibrant community of stakeholders, including policymakers, investors, entrepreneurs, and civil society, dedicated to driving capital to areas where it can generate the greatest impact while delivering financial returns.

As part of the broader effort to cultivate a robust impact investing ecosystem across Africa, AIIG brings together African National Advisory Boards (NABs) for Impact Investing and Taskforces. By fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange, AIIG aims to create a stronger foundation for impact investing initiatives

throughout the region.

AIIG's objectives encompass not only the mobilization of capital but also the promotion of sustainable business models, the advancement of social and environmental causes, and the fostering of partnerships that empower local communities. Through collaborative efforts, AIIG seeks to channel investments towards key sectors such as healthcare, education, renewable energy, agriculture, and technology, creating a lasting positive influence on the lives of Africans.

Esteemed NAB leaders from Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and Zambia along with Taskforce leaders from Kenya, Senegal, Egypt, Burkina Faso, Mauritius and Cote D'Ivoire will support the creation of enabling policies and regulatory frameworks that enable impact investing to thrive in Africa, by engaging with governments, multilateral institutions, and other stakeholders.

Lagos will partner with Customs for ports turnaround -Sanwo-Olu

Lagos State Governor, Mr Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has reiterated his administration's commitment to making Lagos a business destination for as many investors as possible to improve the economic prosperity of the state.

He said the Lagos State Government will continue to partner with the Nigeria Customs Service to ensure turnaround for the ports in the State to be globally competitive and make Lagos a top destination for West African countries.

The Governor also restated his government's commitment to construct a new port in the Badagry axis of the State to decongest Apapa and Tincan Island ports and bring in more investors into the State, noting that the State Government is already

in touch with a contractor for the construction of the Badagry Port.

Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu spoke on Tuesday when the Acting Comptroller-General of the Nigeria Customs Service, Adewale Adeniyi paid him a courtesy visit at the Lagos House, Marina.

He said: "I want to assure you that Lagos and Lagosians will continue to give you hospitality; a place of comfort and a willing environment where business can thrive, where officers can do their work without fear or favour, and where service can be rendered to our citizens, your customers, and the international community at large.

"We will continue to work together. And because of where we are as a country

and the need to increase our export, foreign currency and ensure that we are not a mono-product country that relies only on oil, we will encourage our manufacturers to export so that they can drive more foreign direct investment and foreign currency that can help to improve our currency."

Speaking on Lagos State Government plan to construct Badagry Port as an additional port to the existing Apapa, Tincan Island, and Lekki ports, Governor Sanwo-Olu said "The whole idea is to build strategic infrastructure for our citizens. Lekki is on the Eastern part and Badagry on the Western part so that we can decongest Apapa and Tincan which we have stretched beyond their capacities.

"We need to think forward

and I am happy that investors are putting the funding together and all the approvals are being sorted so that in two years, we might also have a brand new port. These are some of the things that will ensure that things can move in and out and we can begin to compete with some of the nice ports we see around the world so that we can improve the revenue earning of government and be able to do any other things."

Speaking earlier, the Acting Comptroller-General, of Nigeria Customs Service, Mr. Adewale Adeniyi, who lauded the giant strides of the Babajide Sanwo-Olu's administration, said Lagos as the economic nerve center of Nigeria, generates 70 to 75 percent of Custom revenue in the country.

PenCom urges NECA to improve pension contribution compliance

The director general of National Pension Commission(PenCom), Aisha Dahir-Umar, noted that, though members of Nigeria Employers Consultative Association(NECA) have been playing active participatory role in the contributory pension scheme(CPS), they need to develop more robust programmes that can further

improve compliance with the Pension Reforms Act(PRA) 2014 by its members.

Dahir-Umar, who was represented by PenCom's head of Corporate Communications, Abdulquadi Dahiru, at the 66th Annual General Meeting(AGM) of NECA in Alausa Ikeja, Lagos, reiterated that "It is gratifying to note that as a result of

the unwavering support of NECA for the Contributory Pension Scheme(CPS), the pension fund assets contributed by the Organized Private Sector(OPS) under the management of Pension Fund Administrators(PFAs), as at 31" May 2023, amounted to N4 053trillion."

The commission, however, expressed its appreci-

ation to member companies of NECA for their continued compliance with the provisions of the Pension Reform Act (PRA) 2014. Notwithstanding this accomplishment, the commission urged association to develop robust programmes that can further improve compliance with the PRA 2014 by its members.

Moreover, she said: "As part of its regulatory and supervisory functions, the Commission has continued to issue new and strengthen existing Guidelines, frameworks, and Regulations to make for the smooth implementation of the Contributory Pension Scheme and the welfare of active employees and pensioners

under the Scheme."

She also said, PenCom has also issued the Guidelines on Accessing Retirement Savings Account Balance towards Payment of Equity Contribution for Residential Mortgages in order to facilitate contributors' ownership of residential homes during their working life.

FIFA Women's World Cup: Tinubu tips Super Falcons to win

UKPONO UKPONG

President Bola Tinubu yesterday tipped the Super Falcons of Nigeria currently participating in the ongoing FIFA Women's World Cup Australia and New Zealand 2023 to victory in their upcoming match tomorrow against Australia.

This was contained in a statement signed by the Special Adviser to the President on Special Duties, Communications and Strategy, Dele Alake. The President firmly believes that the upcoming match on Thursday will be a thrilling encounter that will culminate in victory for the Nigerian team.

"On behalf of all Nigerians, President Bola Tinubu extends best wishes to the Super Falcons as they prepare to face Australia in their second group match at the



FIFA Women's World Cup Australia and New Zealand 2023.

"The President, like other football-loving Nigerians, takes immense pride in the Super Falcons' impressive performance in the opening match against Canada, a formidable opponent and the reigning Olympic Champion.

"Acknowledging the Super Falcons' remarkable achievements as a dominant force in women's football in Africa, President Tinubu is confident that the blending of new talents with seasoned veterans will propel Nigeria's success in women's football to even greater heights in this tournament."

Furthermore, he assured the players and the coaching crew of the enthusiastic support of all Nigerians, urging the team to continue exemplifying Nigeria's spirit of determination and excellence both on and off the pitch, serving as worthy ambassadors of the nation.

Henderson confirms Liverpool exit in goodbye video

Jordan Henderson has confirmed he is leaving Liverpool after 12 years, before an expected move to Saudi Arabian side Al-Ettifaq.

The 33-year-old midfielder looks set to move to the Saudi Pro League in a deal worth £12m plus add-ons.

Posting on his Instagram account, Henderson said: "Just know, I will always be a Red, until the day I die."

Henderson captained Liverpool to their first Premier League title in 30 years in 2020.

The England international also lifted the Champions League, FA Cup, two League Cups, UEFA Super Cup and FIFA Club World Cup during his time on Merseyside.

Henderson will link up again with ex-Liverpool captain and former teammate Steven Gerrard, who is manager of Al-Ettifaq.

He joined the Reds from Sunderland in a deal worth £20m in June 2011 and made 492 appearances for the club, scoring 33 goals and registering 57 assists.

Speaking in the video

filmed at Anfield, Henderson said: "I'm not sure I have any words to sum up how I'm feeling right now.

"I'm in the dressing room for the last time so as you can imagine, it's very emotional."

Henderson said that it was hard to leave his boyhood club Sunderland more than a decade ago but "when Liverpool come knocking, you don't say no".

He added: "I can't lie, there have been hard times, really hard times.

But when I look back at my career at Liverpool, it will always be the good

times that I remember.

"Being made the captain of Liverpool Football Club was one of the greatest honours of my life. From the moment the armband was passed to me, I did everything I could to behave like a Liverpool captain should.

"But the biggest honours at Liverpool weren't personal ones, they were collective; all of us, all of you, together."

Henderson highlighted the Champions League final in Madrid in 2019 when they beat Tottenham to secure the club's sixth trophy in the competition as his "favourite night", and said there were "no words" to describe the support during the parade around the city.

He called the supporters "the best in the world" adding "there can be no doubt, there is no doubt".

With Henderson's move to Saudi close to being completed, Liverpool are preparing to travel to Singapore for two pre-season fixtures, against Leicester City on 30 July and Bayern Munich on 2 August.



Benjamin-Laniyi foundation unity championship hosts 2,200 footballers in Abuja

UKPONO UKPONG

Two thousand two hundred football players from the six area councils are participating in the Adedayo Benjamin-Laniyi foundation unity football championship.

The president of the foundation (Adedayo Benjamin-Laniyi), while declaring open the tournament in Abuja on Wednesday, said the tournament aims at uniting the youths of the state capital and the entire nations.

She maintained that the competition, which would be rounded up on Saturday 29, July would be institutionalized to help build talents and also

to stand as an icon of peaceful community cooperation.

She called on youths to embrace the spirit of sportsmanship and national cohesion, as she called on everyone from all walks of life to embrace unity, saying peace and unity of a nation starts from family and community.

Also speaking, the Director, Department of Sports, Federal Capital Territory Administration, Lukas Istiphanus, who pledged the Administration's support for the tournament, hailed the doggedness of Adedayo Benjamin-Laniyi unity championship founder.

Istiphanus also called for more philanthropists venture in the sports for job creation, peace and national unity.

Tornadoes TA agrees appointment terms

SAKA BOLAJI,
Minna

Coach Hamza Abdul Azeez Abarah has agreed terms as the new Technical Adviser of Niger Tornadoes Football Club of Minna.

Coach Abarah met with the officials of the club at the club's secretariat and agreed on personal terms.

The management of the club made this pronouncement through its Media Officer, Usman Garba Kuta.

Coach Abarah's appointment is coming shortly after the dissolution of the interim technical crew that was in charge of the team following the departure of Coach Abubakar Bala Mohammed to Lobi Stars of Makurdi.

He has previously coached Sokoto United and Niger Tornadoes as Technical Adviser, and Chief Coach at Enyimba International FC, Aba and Plateau United respectively.

The young Minna-based tactician joined Elkanemi Warriors last season in a move to save them from relegation which was not possible.

Other successful coaches appointed to the technical crew are, Coach Mohammed Majin as Chief Coach, Mohammed Abubakar Ndanusa as the goalkeeper trainer, the assistant coaches are; Tukur Mohammed, Isiyaku Iliyasu, Umar Faruk Hussaini and Christopher Bernard Ishaya.

Also approved by the management is the technical crew for the feeder team of the club.

The Feeder Team is to be headed by Coach Nuhu Ahmed Babayo as the Chief Coach.

Other assistant coaches for the feeder team are; Ibrahim Mohammed Munch, Mohammed Ibrahim Baro, Lawal Mohammed Kuta, Ibrahim Aliyu, Maikudi Ayawa, Bello Mohammed as a goalkeeper trainer, and Ibrahim Musa.

Coach Abarah will be unveiled tomorrow which will allow him to kick off his programme for the 2023/2024 Nigeria Premier League as head coach with the Ikon Allah Boys.

FG receives junior gymnasts, commends them for podium performances

UKPONO UKPONG



The Federal Government has commended the junior Gymnasts for their excellent performances that led to the harvest of medals for the country at the just concluded World Gymnastics Championship held in the Republic of Malta

The Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Sports and Youth Development, Ismaila Abubakar

gave the commendation yesterday in his office when he received the young gymnasts who came to present the medals won at the Tournament to him.

He applauded them for achieving podium performances, clinching 23 medals (8 gold, 8 silver, and 7 bronze) in different categories of the game.

Abubakar commended the Ministry's officials,

Gymnastics Federation of Nigeria as well as the technical crew for their commitment to ensuring the successes recorded at the event.

The Permanent Secretary assured that the Ministry will put all necessary administrative machinery on ground in order to provide the nation's athletes with the opportunity to showcase their sporting talents with a view to enabling them compete favourably with their counterparts globally

Alhaji Ismaila further advised parents of the young gymnasts to ensure that their kids remain focused especially in their educational career so as to provide them with a brighter opportunity even as they continue to excel in the field of sports.

Earlier in his remark, the Head Coach of the

Gymnastics Federation of Nigeria and leader of the team, Anthony Asuquo disclosed that seven Junior Gymnasts represented the country among other 15 countries at the Malta Championship

He informed that of the seven, Chiwendu Okpanku was rated as the 3rd best in the world and 1st in the Vault.

Mr. Asuquo commended the Permanent Secretary, Alhaji Ismaila Abubakar, Top Management Staff of the Ministry and the present Administration in particular, for their commitment to the development of sports in the country, pledging that the Federation will remain committed to ensuring that the country records more podium appearances at future competitions.

FG sets up committee to review National Youth Policy

UKPONO UKPONG

In line with the timeline for the review of the National Youth Policy (NYP), the Federal Government has inaugurated a 27-man Committee to immediately commence work on the 2019-2023 National Youth Policy.

The Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Sports and Youth Development, Alhaji Ismaila Abubakar while inaugurating the Committee yesterday in Abuja, said that the aim of setting up the Review Team by government was to ensure that the Ministry has a befitting Policy Document that will serve as a guide for the development of the nation's teeming youth.

"The National Youth Policy, like other government policies, is the handbook of the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development's guide on youth development as it represents the declaration of the Nigerian Government to the practical support it intends to give to its youth." He said Speaking further, he said that the 2019-2023 Edition of the National Youth Policy is in the last lap of its journey, especially as the policy itself stipulates a 5-year periodic review, hence the need for the commencement of this process.

Alhaji Ismaila informed that part of the successes recorded in the implementation of the 2019-2023 Edition of the NYP by the Federal Government includes Youth inclusion, participation, and access to information, which enables them to know their rights.

The Ministry, in partnership with the Civil Society Organizations, Private Sector and International Agencies, he said, has through enlightenment and publicity, taken National Youth Policy to the grassroots.

He added that various programmes and projects were also implemented across the six geo-political zones in line with the policy thrust of government.

Ismaila explained that the periodic review of the NYP guidelines has become imperative, particularly due to the dynamic nature of human endeavour, which he emphasised is not static. "It is the dynamic nature that has prompted the review of the guidelines in human activities in order to get better results", he added

The Permanent Secretary observed that, there have been a lot of changes in the perception and actions of Nigerian youth towards government policies in the last five years, especially in this era of Information Communication Technology (ICT).

Besides, he said, "the age range of youth (15-29) in the current Edition of the NYP has generated a lot of debate and controversy, as it appears to fall short of Nigeria cum Africa youth age reality; thus the justification for the review to address the current situation."

The Permanent Secretary noted that it is in view of these that the government approved the commencement of the review process with the formation and inauguration of the Committee, which is expected to work from now to February 2024.

While charging the Committee to bring their wealth of experience to bear in ensuring that they produce a one stop shop Policy Document for implementation by government, he stated that other terms of reference for the Team is to amongst others; oversee the entire review process of the National Youth Policy 2024-2027 until its launching; ensure integration of youth concerns from each geo-political zone into the final policy document; ensure that the new policy is in tune with global trends; supervise the various consultations with stakeholders during the review process; as well as bring up any other activity that will add value to the process.

Alhaji Ismaila com-

mended all relevant stakeholders for their support in ensuring the success of previous reviews as well as implementation of the editions.

The Permanent Secretary therefore called on development partners and other relevant stakeholders to put all hands on deck, work assiduously and note "that it is our collective responsibility to continue to ensure youth issues are mainstreamed into National Agenda".

He assured that the Ministry will not only continue to maintain open doors to partnerships and collaborations but also repose confidence on the ability of the team to live up to its task of producing a new Policy for Nigerian Youth in line with the policy thrust of the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu-led Administration.

Responding, the Chairman of the Committee and Director, Education and Youth Development EYD, in the Ministry, Alhaji Kabiru Mohammed assured that the Committee will work tirelessly and also bring their wealth of experience to bear with a view to providing Nigeria with the best policy document in recent times for our teeming youth in line with global best practices. He thanked the Federal Government for giving them the opportunity to serve in this capacity.

Spain coach Jorge Vilda warned there is more to come from his side after they thrashed Zambia to progress to the last 16 of the Fifa Women's World Cup with a game to spare.

Jenni Hermoso and Alba Redondo both scored twice as the Spanish secured a second successive win at the tournament in Australia and New Zealand.

Spain have scored eight goals so far without reply, underlining their credentials as potential World Cup winners, but Vilda insists his side can play even better.

Spain play Japan on Monday, 31 July (08:00 BST) in a game that will decide the Group C winner, and the Vilda said: "We haven't seen the best version of Spain, that is absolutely clear.

"We have four days to improve, recover physically and mentally, and put in a better performance against Japan."

Spain opened their campaign with a comfortable 3-0 win against Costa Rica last week, having a total of 46 shots on goal.

They picked up where they left off against Zambia, racing into a ninth-minute lead

Spain beats Zambia 5-0 to progress into last 16

when Teresa Abelleira drove in a stunning strike from distance.

Hermoso doubled the lead just four minutes later, heading home a cross on her 100th appearance for her country.

Redondo then rounded the goalkeeper in the second half before Hermoso scored her 50th international goal late on after a lengthy video assistant referee check.

Hermoso almost had a hat-trick soon after but her shot was pushed on to the crossbar, but Spain got their fifth when Redondo drove home in the final few minutes.

The victory also ensured Japan - who beat Costa Rica 2-0 earlier on Thursday - also progress. Spain are currently ahead of Japan on goal difference and a draw with them on Monday will secure first place for Vilda's side.

Richarlison impresses Postecoglou with pre-season hat-trick

Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou says Richarlison has "all the attributes" he wants in a striker after the Brazilian scored a pre-season hat-trick.

Spurs beat Lion City Sailors 5-1 at Singapore National Stadium to finish their tour of Asia with a victory.

Richarlison was a second-half substitute and scored two goals within eight minutes before scoring a third in stoppage time.

"I really like him [as a player], said Postecoglou in Singapore.

Shawal Anuar put the Sailors into a surprise lead on 14 minutes before England captain Harry Kane equalised with a penalty after midfielder Pape Matar Sarr was brought down in the area at the end of the first half.

Argentina midfielder Giovanni Lo Celso claimed Spurs' fourth goal when he drove home a loose ball in the six-yard box after 73 minutes.

Richarlison joined Tottenham from Everton for £60m last summer and has scored three goals for the club in 35 appearances.

Australian Postecoglou, who took over as manager at the start of July, said the 26-year-old's main attributes were his strength and work ethic, adding: "He's always in the right areas

"I've really got a lot of time for him and he's one of the players I'm really looking forward to working with. You try to picture your players playing the football you want to play and I certainly think he can."

Richarlison said he "felt good" and thinks this season could be a turning point in his Spurs career.

"Last season, I had too many injuries - but now I feel good. My body is good and I am so happy," he said. "Singapore has been so good for me and for the group."

Postecoglou made 11 changes at half-time and Richarlison's first goal fell to him from Lo Celso's deflected effort, with his second coming shortly after as he pounced on a weak clearance to head in.

He was twice denied a hat-trick goal by the offside flag but his persistence paid off when he burst through the Sailors' defence to coolly flick home his third.

The comfortable victory handed Postecoglou his first win in charge, after they were beaten by Premier League rivals West Ham in their opening pre-season game last week in Perth, Australia.

Their match with Leicester City in Bangkok, Thailand was cancelled because of a waterlogged pitch and Postecoglou's side will now travel home to face Shakhtar Donetsk at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium on 6 August.

Earlier on Wednesday, news broke that UK billionaire Joe Lewis, whose family trust owns Tottenham, will appear in a US court to face insider trading charges.

Spurs declined to comment on the matter, saying it was not a club issue, with Postecoglou adding: "It doesn't affect me in terms of what I'm trying to do."



Mockery of religion: Emefiele In many of us

BY RICHARD ODUSANYA

GUEST COLUMNIST

With

RICHARD ODUSANYA



No country is immune to corruption. The abuse of public office for private gain erodes people's trust in government and institutions, makes public policies less effective and fair, and siphons taxpayers' money away from schools, roads, and hospitals. Godwin Emefiele, suspended governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), arrived at the federal high court in Ikoyi, Lagos, around 9:18 am on Tuesday, clutching the Bible. The King James Version (KJV) of the holy book was tucked inside a red paperback. Accompanied by the bible!

The big question is; is religion a scam?

Religion is not a scam in itself but there are so many scammers using religion to scam people.

They have discovered that the easiest way to scam people and still not be seen as a criminal is by telling them 'God said this or that'. Who will go and ask God if He said it or not? And Israel has been a secular state for decades. Their decisions have nothing to do with religion. Corruption of church officials may concern property or the manipulation of religious teachings to fit national or political aspirations. Nonetheless, the challenge of our society is the level of Emefiele in many of us.

Godwin Ifeanyi Emefiele, CFR is a Nigerian politician, economist, and banker who served as Governor of the

Central Bank of Nigeria from 4 June 2014 until his suspension by President Bola Tinubu, on 9 June 2023.

Emperor Meffy' Godwin Emefiele was the second longest-serving governor of Nigeria's Central Bank and oversaw its biggest economic downturn. His biggest undoing turned out to be a widely criticized currency redesign. Meffy got to unravel the key that unlocks the hearts of the Nigerian men of power. Its acronym is GGG – Graft, grits, and genuflection. Immediately after Jonathan exited as president, he effortlessly meandered into the hearts of the next holders of the reins of power. 'Emperor Meffy' in the eyes of the storm.

For Hon. Kazaure, a former member of the House of Representatives (MHR), Meffy is the emperor in a corrupt empire where he singly decides who to turn into a billionaire overnight. What Kazaure is saying is not new. Meffy's predecessor publicly made allusions to the trend long ago. It also formed talking points in bars and gardens around Abuja. Many people allege that Meffy's encouragement of the parallel forex market was a window to create instant billionaires among members of his

cycle within his political party.

Furthermore, Kazaure said you could be in your bed and they send you \$10million at the official CBN rate through your bank.

The bank would call to inform you that you have been given \$10million from the CBN at the official rate.

The same bank would open an account in your name and tell you how much they will buy the dollars from you. Once you accept, your account will be credited with the difference between the CBN rate and what the bank bought from you. According to Kazaure, that is how easy it is for Meffy to create billionaires.

Enter the 'Meffy' syndrome' which is synonymous with average Nigerian public office holders and their mindsets. I believe that a major root cause of our problem as a nation is our unprogressive mindset as Individuals, as a society, and as a nation.

A mindset is a set of beliefs or a way of thinking that determines one's behavior, outlook, and mental attitude. As we all know, mindsets influence the way we think, the way we do things, and ultimately, our behaviour. Our wrong mindsets have brought about wrong orientations, eroded value system, and a thwarted worldview of ourselves and

issues.

Interestingly, the 'Meffy' syndrome' represents the way of thinking and mindsets of many of our citizens particularly the political elite and public office holders as exemplified by the likes of Abubakar Malami, Ned Nwoko, Abdulrasheed Maina, Diezani Alison-Madueke and many others.

The Nigerian nation is indeed at crossroads and never before have we had it so colourful. Every Nigerian at home and abroad feels it so bad one way or another. But for most of us, it does seem that there is very little we can do to improve things. This is because the path to the much-needed transformation is riddled with immense difficulties; with near impossibilities, some will say.

In conclusion, I daresay, that the 'Meffy' syndrome' is the root cause of the problems associated with poverty, and Nigerians from across the country are lamenting the hardships in the land, crying out for urgent measures by the government at all levels to mitigate their suffering which, they said, was becoming intolerable. Hence the need to reactivate the moribund National Orientation Agency (NOA) for efficiency and national re-birth reorientation, ethics, and cohesion – Mind Restructuring Advocacy on my mind.

***Richard Odusanya is a mind restructuring enthusiast.**

